

*John Tawse.*

CHEAP REPOSITORY

TRACTS

FOR

*SUNDAY READING.*


TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

SOME


PRAYERS

FOR

INDIVIDUALS AND FOR FAMILIES.



A NEW EDITION.



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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE following Tracts were first published monthly, together with the other monthly Tracts of the CHEAP REPOSITORY, and had in that form a very extensive sale. They are now collected into one Volume, and so arranged as to furnish a regular course of reading proper for Sundays. The other CHEAP REPOSITORY Tracts are bound up in two Volumes, the one containing the longer, the other the shorter Stories; each of these two Volumes including also some poetry.

It has been often lamented, that there are but few Sermons sufficiently plain to be well suited

to private Families; and it is hoped, that the present Tracts, of which the length is in general much the same as that of ordinary Sermons, may most of them very well serve as a substitute for compositions of that sort; many clergymen and others, having already used them in the single Numbers ~~for this purpose~~. They are expressed, indeed, in language somewhat more familiar than Sermons, for the sake of rendering them extremely plain. It has, however, been the object, to make them at the same time serious and practical, as well as interesting; and it is hoped, that by the blessing of God, they may be instrumental in promoting the spiritual good of persons of every class, into whose hands they may come.

In an age in which so much pains have been taken to circulate the principles of Infidelity, and in which, therefore, it is become so peculiarly necessary to ground people in the know-

ledge of Christianity, it may be presumed, that an attempt, such as the present, will not fail to meet with encouragement from the well-disposed. It will be found, that most of the Doctrines of our Religion, in which it is of great importance to be established, are handled in a plain and practical manner in the course of this Book, while topics of a more doubtful and controversial kind are little dwelt upon. Some Prayers are added at the end for the use of families as well as of individuals.

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THE  
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OUR FIRST PARENT;

WITH SOME  
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*Shewing the happy State of Man in Paradise; and also  
the Sin and Misery which have entered since the Fall.*

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

*Some Remarks respecting our LORD JESUS CHRIST, who is the  
Second Adam, and the only Saviour of the World.*



**H**OW very difficult must it be for an unbeliever to give any tolerable account of the first making of the world!

We find ourselves living on this globe of earth, but we none of us know (except so far as the

Scriptures teach us) how it was formed, nor at what period of time. Has the earth been from everlasting? That seems impossible, for it cannot have made itself. Who made it then? The Scriptures tell us it was God. But at what time? About six thousand years ago, as we may gather from the Bible; and there are many reasons for thinking (though we will not here dwell on that point) that it is not unlikely to have existed about some such space.

We will now speak briefly of the manner in which the world was made, and then proceed to our main subject, which is, the formation of Adam, and his Fall.

"In the beginning," says the Scripture, (that is, in the beginning of the history of our race) "God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form, and void, (that is, it was without regular shape or order) and darkness was on the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light; and God saw the light that it was good: and God called the light day, and the darkness called he night: and the evening and the morning were the first day."

The world having been thus made and brought into order on the first day, God proceeded on the second to make the firmament, that is, the air or atmosphere, by which "he divided the waters, which were on the earth, from the watry clouds which were above it."

On the third day (the earth having been as

yet covered over with one universal sea), the waters were commanded to "gather themselves together into one place, so that the dry land might appear;" and at the same time the trees and herbs were created.

On the fourth day, God made those "two great lights; the sun, or the greater light, to rule the day, and the moon, or the lesser light, to rule the night. He made the stars also."

On the fifth, all those living creatures, which either swim in the sea, or fly in the air, were called into existence.

And on the sixth, the cattle and living things which walk or creep on the earth.

And now, last of all, was made man, the lord of this wonderful creation.

There was evidently a plan in this procedure of the Almighty. The earth was first made, and next the animals, and then man; just as a house is first built and set in order, and then the inhabitant walks into it.

But let us here take notice of the manner in which the making of man is spoken of. When God made the light, he said merely, "Let there be light, and there was light." When he made the beasts, he said only, "Let the earth bring forth the living thing after its kind;" but when man was about to be created, the Almighty is represented as saying, "Let us make man in our image, and after our likeness;" and it is added, "Let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the

*The Fall of Adam, &c.*

cattle, and over all the earth. So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

What a being of dignity then is man! he was created in the very image of his Maker, and after his likeness! The powers of thought, of reason, of imagination, and of memory, are wonderful powers; they are possessed by the Creator in their full perfection, and they have been communicated in a suitable degree to man the creature also, though not in like manner to the brutes. Let it then be remembered, that all these bespeak the divine original of man. But that remarkable expression, of his being "made in the image of God," seems also evidently to imply, that man was at first made like to God, in respect to purity and holiness. The devils, no doubt, possess much of those powers of reason and thought, and imagination and memory, which were spoken of; and if man, while he was endowed with these, had been created in a state of wickedness, he might then more properly have been said to be made in the likeness of the devil, than in the holy likeness of his Creator. God then made man upright. When our first forefather came out of his Creator's hands, he was pure and holy like Him that made him. "He was created," as the apostle expresses it, "after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness."

Here let my readers stop to contemplate the pleasing subject of this fair creation of God.

We read that God now “looked down on every thing which he had made, and behold it was very good;” that is, every thing answered the end for which it was created, and every thing was perfect in its kind. The earth was not that disordered place, which since the Fall it has become. The herbs and the trees yielded freely their increase. Blight, and mildew, and famine, and scarcity, and poverty, and want, were as yet unknown. Death had not yet entered with its attendant train of sorrows, sicknesses and pains. Adam and his partner Eve dwelt peacefully in the garden of Eden, which they were employed to cultivate. All nature smiled around them, and was drest, no doubt, in its most beautiful attire. Every thing was exactly suited to afford them happiness; and this favoured pair, without angry passions, without undue selfishness, without anxiety or distrust, and without murmur or complaint, enjoyed the good which God had given them, and lived in favour with their Maker.

But we have now to describe a most melancholy change in their condition. It had pleased the all-wise Creator, when he made man, to appoint a certain trial for him, which was meant to serve, no doubt, as a test of his love and obedience. His trial consisted in his being forbidden to eat of one tree standing in the middle of the garden of Eden, which was called, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, while the fruit of all the rest of the trees might be freely eaten.

We have all of us our trials somewhat in the

same manner now ; thus, for instance, we may eat the food which is our own, and which is wholesome for us ; we may take the rest which is necessary to refresh the body ; we may indulge our natural affections and inclinations in the manner which God has ordained ; but then we must not carry any thing to excess ; and there are a number of things which we must in no case do. Oh ! let us remember when we see some forbidden pleasure within our reach, that we are not to touch it ; but that it is placed there for the trial of our faith, just as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was placed within the sight Adam's eye, and within the reach of his arm.

“ And God said to Adam, In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

The Scriptures proceed to tell us, that Eve was first tempted by ~~the~~ serpent, (namely, by the devil, as is commonly supposed) who said to her, in direct contradiction to God, that if she and her husband should eat of the forbidden fruit, “ they should not die, but should become as gods, knowing good and evil.”—“ She then, seeing that the fruit was fair, and much to be desired to make one wise, gathered some of it, and gave it to her husband, which he did eat.”

Oh ! wretched Adam, how art thou now fallen ! thou hast believed the enemy of God, instead of God himself, being tempted to this crime by her who was made to be a help-meet for thee ! how is thy gold become dross, and thine honour laid in the dust, and thy glory departed from thee !

Adam, by this act, renounced his allegiance to

God, and broke the condition on which the favour of his Maker had been suspended; and, therefore, the curse which had been threatened remained now to be executed—"In the day that thou eatest thereof, it has been said, thou shalt surely die." Those words must necessarily be understood to imply, that he should forfeit his natural life, and be deprived of that happy state of existence, which, while obedient, he was intitled to enjoy; and that, instead of this, he should come under the curse of God. Here also the New Testament comes in aid, and teaches us, that "sin having thus entered the world, and death by sin, death in this manner passed upon all men, for that all have sinned; and that through this one man, judgment came upon all men to condemnation."

Thus did Adam fall; by aiming to be as God, he lost even his former rank as man; and by wickedly listening to the temptation of the devil, he appears to have become a sharer in his guilt, and consequently also in his condemnation.

Soon after this event, our first parents are described as ashamed to meet the eye of God when he appeared to them, as he was wont to do, in the garden; they hid themselves among the trees, and said, that they had felt ashamed, because they were naked. Sin and shame, it may be remarked, entered into the world together.

"And the Lord God said, Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? and the man said, the woman

whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

It seems as if Adam, by this expression, meant partly to cast the blame on God who had given him the woman that had proved his tempter, and he certainly casts the blame partly on Eve, while she in the same self-justifying spirit, replies to God, when he charges her with the guilt, "The serpent beguiled me and I did eat."

Our first parents, as we may plainly see, were now become poor guilty sinners; they were disposed to palliate and justify their crime, and thus to add sin to sin, just as is the way with all wicked people now. They also became, after this time, full of the dread of God, instead of the love of Him, and disposed to say to Him, as Peter did to our Saviour when first called to by Him, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

God immediately proceeds to pronounce the following curse on them, "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."—"And, unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto

the ground, for out of it wast thou taken, for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”—“And the Lord sent him forth from the land of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man, and he placed at the East of the garden of Eden, cherubims and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life.”

Such is the history of the Fall ; and O how has iniquity ever since prevailed in the world ! Cain, the first born son of Adam, became the murderer of his brother. The whole earth is said, presently after, to have been “ filled with violence.” “ God looked down on the children of men, to see if there were any that were righteous, but all flesh had corrupted his way before the Lord, and every imagination of man’s heart was only evil continually, insomuch that the Almighty is said (speaking after the manner of men) to have grieved him at his heart, and to have repented that he had made man.”

After bearing with the rebellious offspring of Adam for about two thousand years, it pleased God to drown the world with a flood, the family of Noah alone being excepted, who was found righteous. The great cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were, after this, destroyed for their wickedness ; and so were Tyre and Sidon in still later times.

In order that true religion might be maintained, at least among one people, God separated to himself the single nation of the Jews, and made

a covenant with them, and gave them his laws, and wrought many miracles among them. But so corrupt is every where the nature of man, that even the Jews provoked him to wrath, and proved rebellious and unbelieving.

At length it pleased God, in his infinite mercy, to send into this lost and ruined world, his Son Jesus Christ, as he had foretold he would do, even at the very time of the Fall of Adam; for when that curse, which has been already spoken of, was denounced, God, who, in the midst of judgment, remembers mercy, was pleased to declare, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head;" a promise which implied, that one sprung from the woman should come to destroy the power of the serpent, or evil spirit, and to triumph over him.

The Jews had become so wicked, at the time of Christ, that, instead of welcoming him as their Saviour, they even put him to death. Having thus filled up the measure of their iniquities, their city was taken and trodden down of the Gentiles, their people were led captive, or destroyed, and they have become a by-word and a proverb among the nations unto this day, as had been foretold.

But have then the other nations of the world been better than the Jews? no, the heathens around them were so wicked and abominable, that the Jews were ordered to cut them off. And even since the publishing of Christianity in the world, how has wickedness prevailed! Read whatever history you will, you will read an account of little else than the vices and follies of our

race. What a wicked world is it that we live in at this hour! How different from that peaceful, happy paradise, which was just now described! Well may it be said, that "the thorn and the thistle have grown up in it." Every where, alas! we see proofs of the Fall; for what are all the present wars among nations, together with the bloody revolutions which take place in states; what are all the conflicts for power among the great, and all the complaining and repining among persons of low degree; what are the feuds and quarrels in private families; what the malice and evil speaking, the fraud and lying, the impurity and the drunkenness, the irreligion and prophaneness, as well as the corruption even of Christianity itself—what are all these but so many consequences of the Fall of Adam, and so many proofs of that corrupt nature which has descended to all his children?

And as the world has become sinful, no wonder that it has become miserable also. It is distressed, at this day, with so many evils, because it has so much that is offensive to God in it. It is one part of his appointment, that men's own evil passions shall be a plague both to themselves and to each other. Death also has been sent into the world; for ever since the days of Adam, that sentence has been executing, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." And what sorrows and diseases have been brought in together with death! What pangs of the dying, what affliction for the surviving friends! And above

all, what terrors of conscience, and what a melancholy foreboding of a day of future judgment afflict our guilty race !

The story we have now told of the Fall of Man, and of the corruption which has followed from it, stands in the first pages of our Bible ; it leads the way to all Christian truth, and without it all our other religious knowledge will be of little use. But how shall we ever learn the necessity of any change in our character and condition, unless we first know, that the natural state in which we find ourselves, as children of Adam, is altogether fallen and corrupt. " They that are whole," says our Saviour, " need not a physician ; but they that are sick."—" I come not to call the righteous, (that is them that think themselves righteous), but sinners to repentance." We must know that we are sinners, or we shall never repent and receive the gospel ; just as a man must know that he is sick, or he will never go to the physician for his cure. " We must be born again ;"—we have " an old man" within us, which must be put off ; and we must put on that " new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness."

I know that many are not aware, that there is this natural corruption in them ; but the reason of it is, that they have not examined carefully the Scriptures, nor observed sufficiently the evil that is in the world, whose fashions, probably, they follow, nor looked strictly into their own hearts. Such persons, in short, have no just discernment of right and wrong, and are far from judging every

thing to be evil which God judges to be so. I say, therefore, let these people study the Scriptures. Other books varnish over the sins of men, and flatter the world that it is better than it is; for the writers of them partake in the common blindness and corruption: but the Scriptures, which are the word of God, and which were written by men who were moved by the Holy Ghost alone, speak the truth. The scriptures give the true picture. — They relate the history of the world, and the history they give, is little else than the history of that controversy, which God has had with man ever since the Fall of our first parent. Nay, the Bible, even in describing the best of men, describes them as acknowledging their own natural corruption, and as saying, with one voice, that they were “born in sin, and shapen in iniquity,” and that they “were by nature children of wrath, even as others.”

But above all, let those, who are not aware of the corruption of their own nature, study the law of God. Let them examine themselves by each of the ten commandments, explained as our Saviour has taught us to explain them, and as will be made to appear in some of the following tracts. The study of the law of God will not fail, unless we are wilfully blind, to teach us the same lesson which the Fall of Adam, and which the history of the world, both ancient and modern, unite to teach us; I mean the sinfulness of our present nature, and the necessity which thence arises for that redemption, which has been provided for us by Jesus Christ our Lord. For let no one com-

plain, that the doctrine of the Fall is gloomy and uncomfortable; Christ has taken away the gloom of it through the lively hopes, and through all the means of grace which he sets before us in his gospel; for Christ is the second Adam. As Adam brought upon us the curse, so Christ has come down to us with the blessing; and "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." — "The first man was from the earth earthy, the second was the Lord from heaven;" and, therefore, if we are Christians, we may joyfully say, that "as we have borne the image of the earthy, so also shall we bear the image of the heavenly."

In all our religious inquiries, let us, therefore, be sure that we take this knowledge of the Fall for our foundation, and then we shall proceed safely, and build securely; whereas, they who set out in religion with the vain notion of the natural goodness of their hearts, do but deceive themselves with a false philosophy, and indulge their own pleasing dreams in defiance both of Scripture and of experience.

---

## N O A H ' s   F L O O D .

**N**OAH was an instance of a righteous man living in the midst of a very wicked generation.

Though the world, which is now about six thousand years old, had been created only about one thousand years at the time of Noah's birth,

it was probably then very full of inhabitants, for as the life of the same man lasted often for eight or nine hundred years, many generations may be supposed to have flourished together. Adam himself was alive at the same time with Noah's father, and he died only a short time before the birth of Noah, so that our first forefather must have seen a very numerous, and (what was extremely distressing) a very depraved posterity. He must have beheld his children's children corrupting one another, and making a rapid progress in iniquity. It pleased God, however, to preserve a chosen seed in the family of Seth, from whom also the Saviour was to come, of which line of descendants it is said, that "a blessing was in it."

But did this peculiar seed all walk uprightly in the sight of God? Ah! how difficult is it to live unspotted from the world! Even these were infected with the general corruption; and it seems as if the want of separation between the professors of religion, and the open sinners, had hastened the destruction of the earth, for we read that "the sons of God" (by which those who seemed to be of the true religion are very naturally supposed by many to have been intended) "saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and took to them wives of all which they chose." A general carelessness about the religious character of those with whom the professors of religion intermarried, arising from an unrestrained affection for their persons, appears to be given as a reason why matters so soon came to that dreadful pass in which we are now to describe them. The few who retained

the knowledge of God, probably discovered little zeal, and were scarcely to be distinguished from others, or at least men were strangely drawn aside into worldly compliances.

But while sin was thus advancing with rapid strides, did not God notice, or behold it? Yes; he often made himself known in those days by signs and judgments; "My Spirit," he also says, "shall not always strive with man." It appears then, that the Spirit of God strives even with the most profligate sinners; and, in another place, the "patience of God" is represented as "well nigh wearied out in the days of Noah." Yet behold his long-suffering! Still he allows men a respite of an hundred and twenty years, during which period he waits upon them with offers of mercy. He warns before he strikes, and thus proves that he "willeth not the death of the sinner," and that his destruction is of himself.

It is now said, that "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Is not this description too strong? Ought not some further evidence of it to be given? My answer is, "God saw it." The men themselves, no doubt, did not see it, and if we could suppose them to have had historians of their own, these, no doubt, would not have mentioned it, but God's testimony is better than that of a thousand witnesses.

Such then being the state of mankind, who can wonder to hear the determination of a holy God, to destroy the earth with its inhabitants, and

to leave a monument of his awful justice for the warning and instruction of every age that was to follow.

But are none exempted from this general charge of iniquity? Yes, here is an individual selected for our notice. It is said that "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." The most honourable testimony is given of him in Scripture; he is said to have been "a just man, and perfect in his generations;" which does not mean that he was without fault, for we read in another place of his being actually overtaken by sin, but it means that he was a sincere or complete and consistent character, uncorrupted by the wickedness that prevailed in his own time. It is also said in another place, that "he walked with God," he was mindful of him, accustomed to pray to him, regarding God in all he did: he was also zealous in his cause, for he was "a preacher," as well as an example "of righteousness;" and while the "long-suffering of God" waited on the sinners around him, Noah was raised up for the special purpose of instructing and rebuking them, and warning them of their approaching destruction.

But while we admire his undaunted courage, let us ask ourselves whether we are equally courageous in the same cause; and while we commend Noah for renouncing and reproving the works of darkness, though licensed by general custom, whether we equally renounce and reprove the evils which are now commonly practised. If the fashion of the times will justify us, surely it might have justified Noah also.

But let us next speak of the period of the deluge, and of the favour shewn to this eminent person. God condescended to reveal to him the tremendous purpose of destroying all flesh by a flood of water, "saying unto Noah, the end of all flesh is before me;" yet he enters into covenant with him, to save him and his little family from the general ruin.

The method of deliverance, with all the circumstances of it, was of divine appointment. The Lord himself directed Noah to prepare an ark of immense size, which might contain his household, and a small remnant of all other creatures, for the preservation of their different species. In this building, the various animals, with sufficient provision for their support, were to ride in safety, while one common desolation swept away the inhabitants of the earth with all its furniture.

Behold then the faith and obedience of Noah, for which he is mentioned as a bright example to all succeeding ages! An inspired writer has told us, that "he believed God." "By faith, Noah being warned of God, of things not seen as yet, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

Methinks I see him with stedfast countenance and determined step, proceeding amidst the profane ridicule of surrounding multitudes, to prepare materials for the ark, and to engage workmen in this strange and arduous employment, while at the same time he reproves that wicked generation, warns them of their danger, and de-

nounces, if they repent not, the approaching judgments of God upon them. Instead of respecting his faith, they smile at his credulity, and scornfully turn away from this venerable man of God. Year after year, however, he pursues his work. Year after year they taunt him with his folly, and amuse themselves with overlooking the vast building as it proceeds. "Surely," say they, "he is a man of a strange fancy, or of a gloomy imagination, or of a disturbed brain; he is forward, troublesome and censorious, always representing our conduct in the most wicked and abominable light." The world, they insist, is not so wicked as he pretends. Fathers and children join in deriding him. High and low, rich and poor, men and maidens, equally forgetful of God, and worldly and unbelieving, comfort each other that they are in the right, and that such a goodly multitude as they seem to make, cannot be altogether wicked, and exposed to one general judgment.

It is here worthy of observation, that the common order of the world does not seem to have been overthrown at the time of which we are speaking, for it is very possible, for the frame of society to be held together, even when the irreligion and corruption of man is extremely great. It is true, indeed, we read "that the earth was filled with violence;" for when the passions of men are not restrained by religion, much violence, both in their language and conduct, is apt to follow of course. One chief feature in their character appears, however, to be their being quite swallowed up by the pleasures and concerns

of this life ; for the Scripture speaks of them, at that time, as eating and drinking, and marrying, and being given in marriage ; evidently implying, that their whole time and thoughts were engaged in those things, and that by the means of these they were led to forget God, and to neglect the warnings which were sent unto them.

Let us next view Noah entering into the ark, according to the commandment which God had given him : “ He, and his sons, and his sons’ wives, because of the waters of the flood ; of beasts also, and of fowls, and of creeping things, there went in two and two, male and female, as God commanded Noah. And it came to pass, after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth, and all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.”

But while we accompany Noah into the ark, let us turn our eyes to the multitudes who remained without, of whom no doubt he took his leave, with many painful sensations.

What a wonderful and tremendous scene ! Oh ! the lamentations and bitter cries of thousands now perishing by that very calamity, the kind notices of which they had refused to attend to, or had presumptuously derided. Many of Noah’s dear relations were included in this number. What anguish must he have felt for them : but in vain ! they had despised his warning, their day of grace was past, and he could afford them no relief.

And now the rain overflows the meadows, and the whole multitude seek, no doubt, the rising

ground ; but the waters increase upon them. A few, probably, reach the mountains, and they trust that, at least, the highest rocks on the mountain-tops shall save them ; “ But the waters prevail exceedingly, and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail, and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth on the earth, and every man ; and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.”

It is no unimportant remark, that the truth of this story, of which we have thus given the plain scriptural account, is confirmed by a variety of striking circumstances, not necessary here to be mentioned ; and also by the several traditions of various and distant nations, differing, indeed, in their religion, but agreeing in their account of an ancient general deluge.

And should we not feel terror for ourselves, while we contemplate these effects of the divine vengeance ? Who can stand before this holy Lord God ? We see here, that the God who threatens, will also execute his threatenings, and that though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished.

But a pleasing prospect opens itself to righteous Noah, “ for God remembered Noah, and every living thing with him in the ark, and made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters were assuaged, and the ark rested on the mountains of

Ararat; and in the tenth month, the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen." Noah now sends forth a raven, and afterwards a dove, from the window of the ark; but "the dove," as yet, "could find no rest for the sole of her foot, and returned into the ark:" and again, "after other seven days, he sends forth the dove" again. "And the dove came into him in the evening, and lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off, so that Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth." What a pleasing confidence would he now feel of his deliverance! Wherever indeed he turned his eyes, he would see the devastation which sin had made; nor can he be supposed to have reflected, without unutterable anguish, on the multitudes that had perished in their iniquities; yet a sense of gratitude for his own wonderful escape, seems to have overpowered him, and to have swallowed up, for the time, every other concern. He begins the new duties of the life which had been preserved to him, by an act of solemn worship to his preserver.

"Noah builded an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast and offered burnt-offerings on the altar."

Sacrifices, no doubt, had been originally appointed by God, for the sake of shewing forth that great atonement, which, in due time, was to be made through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, "that lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world," by whose blood, and not by the blood of bulls and goats, the iniquities of men were to be

pardoned, and the true worshippers were to be brought nigh to God.

And the Lord said, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, neither will I again smite any more every living thing as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

"And God said, I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, that when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."

Thus were the tokens of God's mercy given immediately after He had been displaying his most awful vengeance; and if we are walking in the steps of Noah, we may look on the rainbow, even to this day, with confidence and joy, because it is a sign of security, not from a flood of waters only, but from all the effects of the wrath of God. It is spoken of in the book of Revelations, as the peculiar emblem which surrounds our Saviour; for when he is described as "sitting on his throne," it is said, "there was a rainbow round about the throne," implying, that as God was true to his promise made to Noah, both delivering him from a flood of waters, and no more drowning the world for the sins of men, so also would he be true to that everlasting covenant, made through Jesus

Christ, who is indeed the Saviour, as is promised in the Scripture, of those who put their trust in him.

And it is said in like manner in *Isaiah*, for the comfort of each individual, who shall be found among God's faithful people : " for this is as the waters of Noah unto me : for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of thy peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

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I think we may reduce the whole instruction to be gained from this awful affecting story, to these two heads ; I mean we may learn the " severity" of God, on the one hand, and his " goodness" on the other.

Men are not apt to believe, that God will be true to his word, especially in respect to his threatenings against the wicked. They choose to conceive of him, as some easy being who, because he is merciful, will either not punish at all, or will not punish severely ; or at least, will not extend his punishment to any great number of his creatures ; and when the preachers of righteousness stand up like Noah, and declare, in the very words of Scripture, his eternal judgments on all the wicked, multitudes are apt to think they will never come to pass, and they treat the preachers much as this

wicked and unbelieving world treated Noah before them. But the history which has now been given, shews that God is not the sort of being he is supposed to be, and affords a full answer to this dangerous delusion. "For if God spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person; a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and burning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those, that after should live ungodly; the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment, to be punished."

Such is the argument drawn by the apostle Peter, from these ancient judgments, and it is very remarkable that our Saviour himself makes nearly the same use, though in a still stronger way, of these well known and famous events, explaining by the means of them, the surprise and consternation which will overtake not the few profligate and more abandoned only, but the worldly-minded and careless, and unbelieving at the day of judgment: and is it not then important, as well as truly charitable, to warn men plainly of these sayings of that Saviour whose name we all profess to reverence, and in the truth of whose words, how shall we refuse to trust! For are not many persons apt to live at their ease, up to the hour of their death, who are by no means religious, and who are no more afraid that a day of wrath is coming, than the world of unbelievers were on the day be-

fore the flood. I say again, therefore, let such attend to our Saviour's description of the surprise which will one day overtake persons of this description.

"As were the days of Noah, so also," says Christ, "shall the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not, until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed."

But on the other hand, let the humble and fearful Christian learn from another part of the same story, to trust in the almighty grace and goodness: for as the threatenings of God are sure to the wicked, so also are his promises sure to them that unfeignedly repent, and believe in Jesus Christ. They shall be safe amidst all dangers. When "that great and terrible day of the Lord" shall come, "in which the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth, with all her works therein, shall be burnt up," they having committed their souls into the hands of Christ, having believed his testimony, and walked, though in the midst of an evil generation, according to his holy word, shall then be, like Noah in the ark, safe

amidst the surrounding storm. And it may be added, that even in this world, when times grow dark and threatening; and calamity, either public or private, seems to break in upon them like a flood, when the tempest lowers, and the clouds seem to gather over all the surrounding countries—even then, I say, God's promises of mercy shall be seen by them, shining like the rainbow over the cloud, for even their troubles and afflictions shall remind them of their interest in the Saviour, and in the everlasting covenant of their God.

THE  
S T O R Y  
OF  
JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.



THE first part of Joseph's story, though both instructive and entertaining to all, is particularly so to children. I propose to tell the story nearly in the words of the Old Testament, but to make now and then a few remarks upon it.

Joseph was the son of good old Jacob. "Now Jacob," says the Scripture, "loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his Brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his Brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."

But was not this hatred of Joseph's Brethren against Joseph very wicked? It is true Jacob might be faulty in shewing so much partiality to one son above another, yet this was no excuse for the hatred which was felt by Joseph's Brethren. Methinks this hatred, though as yet it is only concealed in their breasts, will, by-and-by, break out into some very wicked act or other. But let us go on with the story.

"And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his Brethren: and they hated him yet the more."

This is doing worse and worse, and it shews that when hatred once begins, we know not where it will end.

"And Joseph said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: for behold we were binding sheaves in the field, and my sheaf arose and also stood upright, and behold your sheaves stood round about and made obeisance (or bowed down) to my sheaf."

Joseph seems to me to have told this dream thus publicly, through his openness of heart and simplicity; it was a dream moreover which God sent, and God caused afterwards the thing signi-

fied by it to be fulfilled, as in due time we shall see.

“ And his Brethren said to him, shalt thou indeed reign over us ? and they hated him yet the more for his dream, and now for his words.—And Joseph dreamed yet another dream, and told it his Brethren, and said, Behold I have dreamed a dream more, and behold the Sun, and the Moon, and the Eleven Stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his Father and to his Brethren ; and his father rebuked him, and said to him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed ? shall I, and thy Mother, and thy Brethren, indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth ? ”

Poor, honest, simple old man, he little knew how his own intrepertation of the dream was by-and-by to be exactly fulfilled, for so God had ordained.

“ And his Brethren envied him, but his Father observed the saying.”

After this we read, that “ Joseph’s Brethren went to feed their father’s flock in Shechem, and Jacob sent Joseph to them, saying, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy Brethren, and well with the flocks, and bring me word again. So he sent him, and Joseph came to Shechem ; but it happened that they and the flocks were gone forward beyond Shechem, even to Dothan. So Joseph went after his Brethren, and found them in Dothan. And when they saw him afar off, they said one to another, Behold, this Dreamer cometh ! come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we

will say some evil beast hath devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams."

What a dreadful proposal! what! kill their own brother! if they could agree to do this, I do not wonder at their agreeing also to tell a lie, in order to hide their crime; thus not one sin, but two sins were to be committed. But is it possible that all these eleven Brethren should join in putting Joseph to death? Even among bad men, some are apt to be less bad than others: surely, therefore, we may hope, that one or other of Joseph's Brethren will be for stopping short of the crime of Murder.

It proved, as I think might very naturally be expected, that one of Joseph's Brethren named Reuben, though he seems before to have joined in envying Joseph, was afraid of joining in this most horrid crime.

When, therefore, "Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands; and said, shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand on him: this he said, that he might rid him out of their hands, and deliver him to his father's house. And it came to pass, that when Joseph," who was at a distance while this conversation passed, "was come unto his Brethren, they stripped Joseph of his coat, it being his coat of many colours."

What satisfaction would they feel while they were thus stripping him! This was the Coat which Joseph's father had given him, because he was a favourite, and which reminded Joseph's Brethren of his advantage over them. They

now thought themselves revenged upon him; and revenge, as they would say, is sweet. Many a joke, many a bitter and severe expression was uttered, no doubt, while they were stripping him: they had got him into their power, and they were resolved to shew that they were greater than he, instead of his being greater than they as he pretended.

Now this sort of spirit in them was a most wicked thing: it was coupled with envy, and malice, and hatred, and was not far from carrying them on to an act of murder. And here let me warn all my young readers against indulging this same evil temper. Thus, for instance, if you should hear your Teacher praise your school-fellow who stands near you, while he says not a word of praise to you, do not hate and envy your school-fellow on this account; or if you should see your parent give a reward to your brother or sister for supposed good behaviour, do not be eager to think that you equally deserve a reward, and then hate or envy your brother or sister for being more favoured than yourself, for this is to act in the same spirit with the Brethren of Joseph. So also, if some other child should be dressed as fine again as you are, and even as fine as Joseph himself, in his coat of many colours, yet do not do as Joseph's Brethren did. Do not feel any ill-will towards your brother, your sister, or play-fellow for this reason. Do not long to strip the fine coat off of him, as Joseph's Brethren stripped the fine coat off of Joseph, but endeavour to look upon his fine dress contentedly, and without envy, and without any desire to take it from him, and to

put it on your own backs. This is one of the lessons that you ought to learn from the present story, which was not written in the Bible in order to entertain you only, and in order to teach you how to read, but in order to instruct you in your duty also. This passion of hatred and envy, if indulged when you are young, may lead to dreadful consequences when you are old. We shall presently shew you very plainly how in the case of Joseph's Brethren it led on to lying, and to cruelty, and almost even to murder.

For "after they had stripped Joseph of his coat they took him and cast him into a pit, and the pit was empty, and there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat bread."

How very hardened must these Brethren of Joseph have been! They went to their dinner after they had thrown Joseph into the pit, just as if nothing had happened. Men who thus give way to their evil passions, are apt to be very cruel and hard-hearted also.

"And behold a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels, bearing spicery, and balm, and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt."

Now a new thought comes across one of Joseph's Brethren, who was named Judah, and who, though more blameable than Reuben, yet seems rather less so than some of the others.

"And Judah said unto his Brethren, what profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let

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not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh."

Oh Judah! Judah! if he is your brother and your flesh, why do you not deliver him altogether? you should send him back to his father's house, as Reuben wished to do; indeed you should never have thrown him into the pit, nor have joined in taking his coat of many colours from him. Nay, I will say further, you should never even have hated him and envied him, for by having once indulged that wicked hatred and envy against him in your hearts, you have all of you been led on, from one thing to another, until you hardly know how to stop. You dare not now send Joseph back to his father, lest he should tell his father of your having torn from him his coat of many colours, and of your having also ill treated him by throwing him into a pit. Having ill treated him thus far, you are tempted to ill treat him still further, lest you should be found out. Joseph, therefore, now must, at any rate, be got rid of, and not be suffered to get home. To kill him indeed is too bad, and yet if the only choice left you was either to kill him or to send him home, methinks there are some among you who would not scruple to kill him outright; for you had already agreed to leave him in the pit, where he would soon have perished with hunger: so that what you had resolved to do was little short of murder, though you may not have chosen to consider it as such.

It was owing then to the good providence of God, and not to any good design in his brothers,

that Joseph escaped being put to death. It pleased God, who orders all human events, to bring it to pass, that the merchants of Midian should draw near just at the time when Joseph's brethren were in doubt what to do with him. This is what some might consider as chance, and a most lucky chance they might call it. Such kind of chances now and then happen to us all, but in fact they are Providences. There is many a narrow escape for our lives experienced by us, which is entirely owing to God's goodness, though at the time we do not so consider it. How many have tumbled down when they have been children, and would have been killed if some arm had not been stretched out to save them! How many have fallen sick and would have died, if at the critical moment some particular medicine had not been given them! and how many have been cast away, and would have been drowned in the sea, if the same God who sent the Midianites to the relief of Joseph, had not sent some strange and unexpected ship or boat to the place where they were floating. It may here be remarked also, that many matters of importance turn on the smallest points. If these Midianites had not gone by on the very day, and the very hour of the day on which they did, Joseph (speaking after the manner of men) would probably have suffered death, and not one of those great events in his life, which are soon to be spoken of, could have happened. One of the chief things, which I wish my readers to learn from this history of Joseph, is the doctrine of a particular Providence.

Judah having proposed to sell his brother to the Midianites, instead of killing him or leaving him in the pit, as had been wickedly intended, "his brethren were content. Then they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, and the Ishmaelites brought Joseph into Egypt." Now Egypt was a far country, to which, when Joseph was carried, his Brethren concluded that they should hear no more of him.

"And Reuben returned into the pit, and behold Joseph was not in the pit, and he rent his clothes, and he went to his Brethren, and said, the child is not to be found, and I, whither shall I go?"

Reuben had himself proposed the measure of putting Joseph into the pit, as a contrivance by which he meant to save his life, for he secretly intended to go afterwards to the pit, and to deliver him, but he was too late in executing his purpose.

"And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; and they brought the coat of many colours to their father, and said, this have we found, know now whether it be thy son's coat or no."

What a bare-faced lie! but thus does one sin lead on to another. It is easy to see from this story of Joseph's Brethren, that when people resolve upon committing one sin, they are immediately tempted to commit another sin: and especially to commit the sin of lying in order to hide what they have been doing: they are also plunged from this time into a thousand straits and difficulties, and it is by adding sin to sin that they com-

monly try to get out. Reader, did you never do something wrong, and then find yourself tempted to tell some lie, or to play some artful trick to conceal it! Joseph's Brethren killed a kid, and then dipped Joseph's coat in the blood of it, and said to old Jacob, "this have we found." This is the very picture of what wicked children sometimes do. Having some sin to conceal, they invent a fine artful tale, which they tell to their masters and mistresses, or to their good old parents, who too readily believe it, and thus, perhaps, like Joseph's Brethren, they come off for the present unpunished. But soon, as in the case of Joseph's Brethren, their lie will be found out. For already God knows it. God saw them do the wicked deed, and God now hears them tell the lie by which they hide it. God waits, indeed, to see if they will repent, but by-and-by, perhaps, their sin shall be known to all the world, and shall not go unpunished. God saw from the very first the secret envy rise up in the hearts of the Brethren of Joseph. God heard them when they sneered at Joseph, saying, "behold this dreamer cometh," and when they privately talked together of killing him. God saw them throw him into the pit, and cruelly leave him there. God saw them also when they were selling him to the Midianites. He had his eye upon them while they were bargaining by the pit's side, and while they were counting over the twenty pieces of silver, which they afterwards put in their pockets. And God's presence also was in the midst of them, while they were killing the kid, and dipping Joseph's coat in the blood of it, and while they were say-

ing to themselves, surely now no one will ever know the thing we have been doing. That story, which these foolish men thought would never be known by any body, is now published in the book of scripture, that you and I, and all the world may be acquainted with it, and that we may draw the right instruction from it.

“When poor old Jacob saw the coat, he immediately knew it, and said, it is my son’s coat, an evil beast hath devoured him: Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him.”

What a set of hypocritical comforters must these sons have been, and how many fresh lies must they have told when they were talking with their father.

“But Jacob refused to be comforted. And he said, for I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus did his father weep for him.”

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## PART II.

### JOSEPH IN PRISON.

**How** little do we know whether the things which befall us will turn out for our happiness or misery! If I was to be made a king to-morrow, I am not sure that it would not prove to my hurt; and if, on the contrary, I was to be sold

to-morrow for a slave, it is far from being clear that it might not be for my good; for God has all events under his direction; and he can bring strange things to pass just as he pleases.

Joseph (as we have already told you) was sold by his Brethren as a slave, to a company of Midianitish merchants. Now the "Midianites brought Joseph down to Egypt, and sold him to Potiphar, who was an officer, or captain of the guard, to king Pharaoh." Joseph fell, as it seems, into good hands; but the Scriptures take care to inform us to what cause this was to be attributed; for there we read, that "the Lord was with Joseph:" hence it was that "he became a prosperous man; and he was taken into the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that Joseph did to prosper in his hand."

What a great thing is it to have God's blessing with us in every thing we do! Some people are always talking of their good or bad luck; and, according to such persons, Joseph was merely a lucky person; he was lucky first, they would say, in getting so good a master, and still more lucky in finding every thing go well to which he set his hand: in fact, however, there is no such thing as luck, as we have observed before; and as we shall have occasion, again and again, to observe in telling this story. Let us learn therefore to thank God, and not to thank our stars, or to thank fortune, whenever we succeed in any thing; for whatever it be, we succeed only because the Lord is with us in that thing.

Joseph, by degrees found such favor in his master's sight, that "he was made overseer of the house, and all that Potiphar had was put into his hands." Such was the confidence placed in him, that at last Potiphar seems to have done nothing for himself, but to have left it all to Joseph; for we read, that "he knew not ought that he had, save the bread that he did eat;" which is as much as to say, that he knew indeed what food was set before him at his own table, in order that he might eat it; but as to all the rest of his affairs, he knew nothing about them.

Now though Potiphar might be wrong in doing so little for himself, yet what an honour was it to Joseph to be thus completely trusted. I have known some common servants indeed in my days, who, by being very remarkable for their faithfulness, have risen first to be upper servants, and then even to be stewards to their masters. Like Joseph, they have set out with doing first one little thing well, and then another, and so they have gone on till they have had very large sums trusted to them, and have got into places of prodigious confidence; and if it were not for the number of servants who pretend to be very trusty when they are not so, the sort of case I am speaking of would probably happen much oftener than it does.

"And it came to pass," says the Scripture, "from the time that Potiphar had made Joseph overseer in his house, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had, both in the house, and in the field."

What an encouragement is this to take good people into our family ; for God, perhaps, may bless us for their sakes. Such a good man as Joseph is a blessing wherever he goes.

But now comes a new scene in the life of Joseph. His prosperity was great ; but the greatest prosperity is sometimes suddenly interrupted. Potiphar had a very wicked wife, and “ she cast her eyes ” very criminally on Joseph. Joseph indeed was “ a goodly person, and well-favoured ; ” and this very goodness, or beauty of his, proved a misfortune to him. How foolish then are those persons (whether young men or young women) who think, that to be handsome and well-looking, is one of the greatest of blessings. It may turn out, perhaps, to be the greatest snare ; it may prove the worst calamity that ever yet befel you, as happened in Joseph’s case.

It appears, that Potiphar’s wife, the wicked woman just now mentioned, “ spake to Joseph day by day,” and tried repeatedly to seduce him ; “ but Joseph refused, and said unto his master’s wife, Behold, my master observeth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand. There is none greater in this house than I ; neither hath he kept back any thing from me, but thee, because thou art his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ? ”

Here let us stop, in order to consider one of the most striking parts of the character of Joseph. He is, in the strongest manner, tempted to sin by a wicked woman : he might also hope for her favour, if he consented : he had to dread

her wrath if he refused: every thing united to make the temptation strong; he was invited by her, not once only, but again and again; not publicly, so as to endanger a discovery, but quite secretly. By what means then did Joseph resist the temptation? He resisted it, partly by reflecting how ungenerous a thing towards his master it would be to yield, and partly also by saying to himself, as he also said to the woman, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

Joseph knew that the eye of God was upon him at all times, and in all places; and I have no doubt that he had long acted under the influence of this knowledge. What was it that had made him such a faithful steward of his master's goods? It was his being aware that God could see the smallest dishonesty in him, and, that God's eye was upon him even when his master's back was turned. And what was it that made him now resist another kind of temptation? It was the same principle of regard to Almighty God. This principle seems to have been very powerful in him, and also to have been always at hand. Joseph (I warrant you) was not used to pass days and hours together without thinking of God, as some people do. Had this been the case, I question whether he would not have yielded to one or other of his temptations.

And now let me request my readers to take a hint from Joseph, and to try themselves in the following manner. Say to yourselves, what am I in secret? What am I when no eye but that of God is upon me? When on the one hand some

fellow creature invites me to sin, when my own inclinations are on the same side, when a present opportunity offers, when there is also no danger of discovery, so that my reputation may be safe, and when my worldly interest will not be hurt by the indulgence, but will rather be promoted by it; when, in short, against all these temptations which beset me, there is nothing to oppose but the fear of God in the heart, how do I then act? Is the fear of God so strong in me as to gain the victory? Am I able to conquer my temptations, however suited to my age, circumstances, and condition in life, by saying, as Joseph did, "How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Now this is true religion. We are apt, many of us, to complain of the difficulties of religion, and to say, that we have not learning enough to understand it; but, surely, that fear of God which has been spoken of is very easy to be understood. I only wish it was as easy to be truly felt. Some there are who fancy themselves religious, because they attend at religious places of worship; because they understand well some religious doctrines; because they remember to have once experienced certain religious feelings, or because they have now a number of religious phrases always in their mouth. Let such persons also try their religion by the same test. Does it enable you to conquer your sins? When all things seem to unite on the side of sin, does your religion in any measure enable you to get the victory? Secret self-denial, secret conquest over ourselves, secret preference to God above all the world, secret consciousness of having been enabled, by

God's grace, to overcome our temptations, and of having, like Joseph, stood firm to God and duty, in times of peculiar and repeated trial, these are some of the proofs of true religion; these are some of the best evidences of our being in a state of grace. I would value these evidences above any comfortable frames and feelings; and they are more, in my opinion, than a thousand fancies, or impressions, that our salvation is sure. Reader, if you hope to stand undismayed before God on the great day of judgment, try yourself by this test. We read but little in Scripture of Joseph's religious opinions; (not that these are unimportant) we read nothing about the particular time and manner of his first becoming religious; we read not a word about the religious form of worship which he preferred, nor about the religious party that he followed, nor the religious name he bore; but we read, that he resisted hard temptations; and that both in his prosperity and in his adversity he was faithful to his God: and we find also, as I shall presently shew you, that although his Brethren had used him very cruelly, yet he behaved very kindly and charitably towards them, and forgave them freely, and rejoiced over them to do them good. May my religion be like his; and may the clearer knowledge, which God has given me, both of himself and of a Saviour, make me the more earnest to do his will, and to walk worthy of that "vocation wherewith I am called."

But to return to the story.—"And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business, and there was none of

the men of the house there within. And Potiphar's wife caught him by his garment, and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out. And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, that she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, "See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; (for to offer an insult to us) and I cried with a loud voice, and it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice, and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. And she laid up his garment by her until his lord came home; and they spake unto him according to the same words; and it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, that his wrath was kindled. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound; and he was there in prison."

What a change! instead of having the command of every thing in Potiphar's house, where he was looked up to, and respected, he is shut up in prison among thieves, and other wicked or suspected persons. And why was he thus shut up? For doing wrong? No! but for doing right. It now and then happens in this world, that a man suffers for fulfilling his duty. It is a mistake to suppose, that virtue here below is always its own reward. Reader, if you act ever so right, I cannot promise you that in this uncertain world you will be rewarded for it. Your conduct may chance to be misrepresented, or not sufficiently understood. Some enemy may injure you; some

false and hollow friend, or lover, who is become offended, may turn against you. Some one, whose feelings, or whose interest you may have wounded, through your unbending virtue and integrity, may set himself up as your enemy, and may come and give false evidence against you, and may charge you, possibly, with the very sin to which that person himself has tried in vain to seduce you, and from which, of all the sins in the world, you are happily the most clear. Let us learn from this part of the story of Joseph to look to God for his favour, and not to care so much, as we are apt to do, about our character with our fellow-creatures. It is better to go to prison, like Joseph, for the sake of a good conscience, than to live in sin with Potiphar's wife, in the midst of a palace, even though we should contrive to live in credit also.

We before remarked, that when Joseph was sold as a slave to Potiphar, and when his affairs seemed at the worst, yet "the Lord was with him, and blessed him, and gave him favour in the sight of Potiphar his master." The same God, who shewed favour to him in his former distress, shewed him the same favour now; for when he had got into prison, we again read, that "the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison, and whatever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand, because the Lord was with him,

and that which he did the Lord made it to prosper.

“ And it came to pass, after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt, and his baker, had offended their lord the king of Egypt, and Pharaoh was wroth against them, and put them into the prison where Joseph was bound; and the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them; and they dreamed a dream, both of them, each on one night; and Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and behold they were sad; and he asked them, Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day? And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me them I pray you.”

In ancient times it pleased God occasionally to send dreams, in order to make known future events; but let not any one therefore suppose, that by the help of dreams he can dive into futurity now. In the days of Joseph, men were in much darkness and ignorance concerning the true God. Jesus Christ had not appeared, the New Testament had not been written, nor as yet even the Old. Signs and wonders were therefore used, in order to prove that the God of Joseph was the true God. But now we no longer need signs and wonders, for the holy Scriptures plainly declare him unto us; and if any man should now follow his dreams, it is more than probable that in doing so he would be obliged to disregard Scripture, and his own common sense also. It is worthy of remark, indeed, that soon after the

law of Moses was given, (which fell far short of the revelation made to us by Jesus Christ) people were expressly warned to beware, lest by following some dreamer of dreams, they should forsake that God who was now made known to them; for it is written, in the 13th chapter of Deuteronomy, "If there arise among you a dreamer of dreams, saying, Let us go after other Gods, and serve them, even though the sign or the wonder shall come to pass, yet thou shalt not go after that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God hereby proveth you to know whether you love the Lord your God," and will "serve him and cleave to him."

But to return to the history of Joseph. God, it seems, having special mercy for him, and having great designs in view, and having first sent two remarkable dreams to Joseph, now sends two other dreams to the chief butler and baker of king Pharaoh, who were in prison with him, and enables him to interpret them.

"And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold a vine was before me, and in the vine were three branches, and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth, and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes; and Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand."

"And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days; yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head, and restore thee unto thy place; and

thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand after the former manner when thou wast butler. But think on me when it shall be well with thee; and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house. For indeed, (added Joseph) I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into this dungeon."

"Now when the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also was in my dream, and behold I had three white baskets on my head, and in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of baked meats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket on my head." And Joseph answered and said, "This is the interpretation thereof: these three baskets are three days; yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree, and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee."

"And it came to pass on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birth-day, that he made a feast unto all his servants, and he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again, and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand; but he hanged the chief baker as Joseph had interpreted to them, yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph."

## PART III.

## JOSEPH DELIVERED, &amp;c.

**P**OOR unhappy Joseph! we left him in prison, where I think he must have had a very anxious time, for who could tell whether it might not be his own turn next to be taken out and hanged as the chief baker was! and yet perhaps there might be some ray of hope that he might, like the chief butler, get out and go back to his office. All such hopes, however, soon vanished, for though Pharaoh's birth day came, "on which he made a feast to all his servants," yet it proved no holiday to Joseph; and though "the chief butler" got settled in his chief butlership again, and was giving the cup every day into king Pharaoh's hand, "yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph."

Two whole years passed without any improvement in this poor prisoner's condition: now, in all this time, it seems very strange that the chief butler should not have contrived to drop a word in his favour: for how wonderfully had Joseph foretold to the chief butler his restoration to office! how affectingly too had he entreated to be remembered by him when the day of his prosperity should come! I cannot help here repeating the parting words of Joseph, for they are very remarkable. "But think of me," said he, "when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make men-

tion of me to Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house ; for, indeed, I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.—Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph.”

Ah ! how just a picture is this of a great part of mankind ! We are many of us apt, while we are faring well ourselves, to take no thought about those who are poor, and sick, and in prison. It pleases God now and then to let one or other of us rise up in the world, upon which we go away and forget all our old companions, some of whom, perhaps, most exceedingly need a helping hand from us : we are grown gay and merry, or busily engaged among our new friends, so that we quite forget our old ones ; and then as to any interest which we have got with the great, we feel so much in awe of those above us, we are so soft, and smooth, and civil, when we are in their presence, and so unwilling to say any thing which may possibly give offence, or which may chance to hurt our own interest, that we dare not speak a word in favour, even of the most injured character, but we dismiss him from our thoughts, just as the chief butler dismissed Joseph from his remembrance.

“ It came to pass, however, at the end of two full years, that king Pharaoh dreamed a dream—and behold there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine, and fat fleshed, and they fed in a meadow. And behold seven other kine came up after them ill favoured and lean fleshed,

and did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. And Pharaoh dreamed the second time, and behold seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk strong and good. And seven thin ears sprung up after them. And the seven thin ears devoured the seven strong and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke and behold it was a dream."

And now what is to be done ! the king himself is troubled with a dream. " And it came to pass," says the scripture, " that in the morning the king's spirit was troubled : and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof, and Pharaoh told them his dreams ; but there was none that could interpret them to Pharaoh." And no wonder, for it was the purpose of God to confound by this dream all the magicians of Egypt, in order that the king might be driven to ask an interpretation of it from Joseph.

" And then came the chief butler and spake unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day ; for Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker : and we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he. And there was there with us a young Hebrew, servant of the captain of the guard, and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams. " And it came to pass as he interpreted so it was : me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged."

What joyful intelligence was this to Pharaoh ! Methinks I see his countenance brighten up at once upon it.

“ Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon. And he shaved himself and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.”

When this great eastern king commands, not a moment is to be lost in obeying him. For two long years had Joseph been made to wait in prison for his deliverance, but Pharaoh would hardly wait two minutes before Joseph, whose appearance had become quite forlorn and wretched, must be brought before him shaved and dressed, and fit for the royal presence.

“ And immediately Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it, and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.”

Pharaoh seems not yet to have understood by whose help it was that Joseph was enabled to interpret dreams. Joseph had no more skill in these matters than any other man, but he was the servant of God, and it pleased God, for his own purposes, to give to Joseph by miracle the power of interpreting the dream of Pharaoh. Accordingly Joseph answers Pharaoh by saying, “ it is not in me, God shall give to Pharaoh an answer of peace.” Thus Joseph takes none of the glory to himself, as a proud person would have been glad to do, but he gives it all to God, to whom alone it was due. Pharaoh then, in a very exact manner, relates his two dreams to Joseph.

“ And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, the dream is one,” that is to say, the two dreams signify one and the same thing, “ and God hath shewed

Pharaoh, by means of them, what he is about to do." "The seven good kine are seven years, and so also the seven good ears of corn are seven years, the dream is one. And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears of corn are also seven years, and these last signify seven years of famine. This, therefore, is the thing which God is about to do; behold there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, and there shall arise after them seven years of famine. Now, therefore, continued Joseph, let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt, and let him appoint officers, and let them gather together the food of the good years and lay it up in the cities, and it shall be for store against the seven years of famine, in order that the land may not perish. And the thing which Joseph said seemed good in the eyes of Pharaoh and of his servants, and Pharaoh said unto his servants, can we find any one equal to this Joseph, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, thou shalt therefore be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou; and Pharaoh took off the ring from his hand, and put it on Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestments of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck, and made him to ride in the second chariot that he had, and they cried before him, bow the knee! and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto

Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without me shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

How wonderful was this exaltation of Joseph! he is now greater than ever he was. He had before been the first man in the house of Pharaoh's chief captain, but he is now the first man in the house of Pharaoh himself; he is greater than Potiphar, his own former master; he is the first person next to Pharaoh in all the kingdom of Egypt.

But let us not forget to admire the good providence of God in all this. It was God that raised him from being a slave to be the chief servant of Potiphar, and it was God that lifted him up from being a prisoner, to be ruler of all Egypt. "For it is the Lord (as the Psalmist says) that maketh rich, and maketh poor, that lifteth up, and casteth down. He taketh the simple out of the dust, and lifteth the poor out of the mire, that he may set him with the princes, even with the princes of the people." It is true, he sometimes afflicts even his most favoured people; "He brings down, as it is said, their heart through heaviness, they fall down and there is none to help them:" "He also suffers them to be evil entreated through tyrants." But at length he "brings them out of darkness, and out of the shadow of death, and breaks their bonds in sunder." "He leads them by a way which they know not, he makes darkness light before them, and crooked things strait," and thus, "though heaviness may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning."

“ O praise the Lord then ye servants of his !  
O praise the name of the Lord ! blessed be the  
name of the Lord, from this time forth for ever-  
more: for he preserveth the way of his saints,  
and hath been ever mindful of his covenant.”  
He saved Noah from the waters of the flood, he  
brought forth righteous Lot out of Sodom, he  
preserved Shadrach and his companions in the  
fiery furnace, and Daniel in the lion’s den. He  
“ delivered David his servant from the peril of  
the sword.” “ He shewed also his ways unto  
Moses, and his works unto the children of Israel.”  
It was “ He also that caused a dearth in the land  
of Egypt, and destroyed the provision of bread.  
But he sent a man before, even Joseph, who was  
sold for a servant, whose feet they hurt in the  
stocks; the iron entered into his soul—until the  
time came that his cause was heard. Then the  
king sent and delivered him; the prince of the  
people let him go free, he made him lord also  
of his house, and ruler of all his substance.”

But let not any of my readers suppose, that  
Joseph is now to be admired merely for his great-  
ness, and that the ring on his finger, and the fine  
vestment on his back, and the grand chariot in  
which he rode, were the chief things he was  
pleased with. Joseph was a great man undoubt-  
edly, but he was as good as he was great, and,  
indeed, what is all earthly greatness unless good-  
ness is joined with it? It is a great sin, in my opi-  
nion, to wish to be a prime minister or a king,  
for the mere honour of it, and I would rather be  
a poor labourer that is of some use in the world,  
than be the greatest monarch in Europe, unless

I could do some special service by my greatness. Joseph proceeds directly to make himself very useful in his new station; "for he immediately went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and travelled throughout the land, and, in the seven plentiful years, the earth brought forth by handfuls, and he gathered up all the food of the seven years, and the food of the field which was round about every city laid he up in the same, and he gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering. And after the seven years of plentifulness were ended, then the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said. And the people of Egypt cried unto Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said unto them, Go unto Joseph, and Joseph opened the store-houses, and sold unto the Egyptians."

I am afraid that my readers have by this time almost forgot old Jacob, the father of Joseph, and his eleven sons, who were living with him in the land of Canaan, at some distance from Egypt. The famine of the last seven years was such as to be severely felt even in their country. "Then Jacob said unto his sons, whose countenances were all cast down on the occasion, "Why do ye look one upon another? behold I have heard that there is corn in Egypt. Get you down thither, and buy for us from thence, that we may live and not die. And Joseph's ten Brethren went down accordingly to Egypt." But Benjamin, being now the father's favourite, was not suffered to go with them, for old Jacob said, "Peradventure some mischief will befall him."

“ And when the sons of Jacob arrived, Joseph was the governor of the land, and he it was that sold to all the people. And Joseph’s Brethren came and bowed themselves down before him with their faces towards the earth.”

Oh! what a change of scene! These are the men, who, the last time they saw Joseph, had said of him, “ Behold this dreamer cometh.” They had then put him into the pit, and had sold him for a slave, because he had foretold, that these his brethren, and his parents (who were signified by the sun, moon, and stars,) should one day bow down before him. How wonderfully does God accomplish his own purposes! The very means which we take to defeat them, are sometimes made use of by God, in order to bring them about. Joseph’s brethren thought, that by selling him for a slave, they should prevent their ever having to bow down before him; and yet by this act of theirs, that very prophecy was brought to pass.

Let no one then presume to think that he can direct events in his own way; or, that he can, either by art or power, prevail against God, for “ the counsel of the Lord, it shall stand, and he will bring it to pass.” “ The Lord taketh the wise in his own craftiness;” “ he ordereth all things in heaven above, and in the earth beneath.” “ Go to now, ye that say, to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow; for that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that.”

Joseph's Brethren, while they were bowing down, did not know Joseph, for he made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly, saying,—“ Ye are spies! to see the nakedness of the land you are come. And they said, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are we come. We are twelve brethren from the land of Canaan, and behold the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not. And Joseph said again, Ye are spies!” and then added he; “ but hereby shall ye be proved, whether there be truth in you. One of you shall go and fetch his brother, while the rest shall be kept in prison. And he kept them all in ward three days. Joseph, however, after this lets them all depart, one only excepted; and he gives them corn in their bags to carry home, bidding them all to come again, and redeem the brother they had left behind, by bringing the next time, their youngest brother Benjamin. Now all this seems to have been done by Joseph, for the purpose of collecting every one of his brethren round him, before he would discover himself to them; and perhaps he was led to practise rather too much art, by his anxiety to see them gathered together.

Then said Joseph's Brethren one to another, “ We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore, behold also, his blood is required of us.”

Oh! how dreadful is a guilty conscience! It will cause our sins to haunt us, years after they have been committed. Now, have none of

my readers ever felt the like kind of terror, in consequence of their having done something amiss? After the commission of a crime, did you never fancy, that every one you met, observed you; and that every common accident was a judgment of God upon you; and if any trouble happened to befall you a long time afterwards, have you not been apt immediately to imagine, that it had some connection with your former guilt? Sin does not always leave this sting behind it, for some people are quite hardened by their crimes, nevertheless, it often does. If the sin be great and dreadful, if it be something particular and extraordinary, like the selling of a brother, or the thought of putting him to death, then, though years should pass away quietly, yet it is probable that conscience will awake and cry out against us at last. In the present case, it appears to me, that Joseph's Brethren had no clear ground to suppose that the trouble they dreaded, was caused by their having formerly sold their brother Joseph. They seem not to have argued very correctly on the occasion; "We saw, said they, the anguish of his soul, and we would not hear, and therefore now is his blood about to be required of us."—But this was not a very sound way of reasoning, for it was not clear that his blood was now going to be required of them at all. It was not clear that any trouble whatever, was about to happen to them; and, even if some trouble should happen to them, their having once sold their brother, might not be the cause; but guilt is fearful. A man that has some undiscovered crime within him, is apt to feel unreason-

able frights and fears; his imagination becomes disturbed; he grows suspicious beyond all reason; he sees an enemy, perhaps, as Joseph's Brethren did, in his best friend, and the very things that are for him, if they happen to go awkwardly for a day or two, are thought to be most dreadfully against him. In short, a person, whose conscience has become burdened with some great sin, has often no comfort in his life, until he has fairly confessed it, and repented of it.

No sooner had Joseph's Brethren expressed their fright, than Reuben lifts up his voice, and observes to them, how "he had intreated them not to hurt their brother, and they would not hear. Therefore, also, says he, is his blood required of us." Here again we may discern a picture of what often happens among those who have been partners in iniquity. When the time of trouble comes, then those who have had less hand in the guilt, begin to reproach the others for having been principals in the business. Like Reuben, they begin to justify themselves, and say: Did I not tell you at the time, to take care what you did, but you would not mind me, and therefore now you have brought down all this trouble on yourselves, and not on yourselves only, but on me also." Nothing is more common than for those who are all, more or less, joined in the same crime, to fall out and reproach one another for it afterwards.

Joseph overheard all this conversation among his brethren, and he turned himself about from them, and wept, and returned to them again, and communed, (or had conversation, by means

of an interpreter,) with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes. Joseph then commanded that their sacks should be laden with corn, and that every man's money should be restored into his sack, which being done, they departed: and as one of them opened his sack to give his ass food at the inn, he espied his money, for behold it was in his sack's mouth. And when he told it his brethren, all their hearts failed them; and they said one to another, "What is this that God hath done unto us!" Here again, their disposition to take fright seems to have shewn itself. I suppose they now thought that some judgment of God would fall upon them in their way home, on account of the same sin of selling Joseph.

And they came unto Jacob their father, and told him all that had befallen them, saying: "The man who is lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies: and we said unto him, "We are true men; we are no spies; we be twelve brethren." Methinks it would be some relief to Joseph's Brethren, to tell their father how harshly they had been spoken to, and how unjustly they had been suspected when they were in Egypt; for whenever a man has some great and real sin on his mind, he is glad to turn to any thing right, or innocent in his conduct, in which, nevertheless, he has been accused of sinning. Jacob's sons had used their father ill in selling Joseph, but they themselves had been used ill on the old man's account, when they went to buy corn for him in Egypt. It would be a comfort, therefore, to talk to him

of what they had suffered for his sake, since it would seem to make amends in some measure for the ill which they were conscious of having done him.

Let us beware, however, of disguising our guilt, by dwelling on some smaller point, in which it may be true that we are innocent. To do so is one of the common shifts of wicked men, and there are none so wicked, as not to have some part of their conduct on which they can dwell with pleasure, and self-complacency.

But when Joseph's Brethren proceeded to explain to their father, how the lord of the country had commanded them to bring to him their brother Benjamin, and how he had detained Simeon as a pledge or hostage on his account; then Jacob, in the bitterness of his heart, exclaimed, "Ye have bereaved of my children; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me." But Reuben now came up, and declared, that if Benjamin might but go with them, he would pledge the lives of his own two infant children, that Benjamin should be brought back in safety. "And Jacob said, my son shall not go down with you, for his brother Joseph is already dead; and if mischief befall Benjamin also by the way, then shall ye bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

## PART IV.

“**ALL** these things are against me,” said good old Jacob, when he was told of what had happened to his sons in Egypt; for we may remember that they had been obliged by Joseph, to leave their brother Simeon behind them, and had even been required to bring Benjamin also. On hearing this, old Jacob cried out, “Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take away Benjamin: all these things are against me.”

Ah! how little did Jacob know of the real nature of those events which were befalling him! The very things which he said were against him, in fact were making for him, for they led the way to the recovery of his son Joseph, who had been lost, and also to Jacob's removal, with all his family, into the plentiful land of Egypt. I do not wonder, indeed, that this poor old man, bowed down as he now was with age and infirmity, and deprived, as he had been, first of one dear son, and then of another, should be unwilling to let his present favourite Benjamin be carried off into Egypt.—And yet, what could he do? The famine now again grew very sore in the land, and at last, when all the corn from Egypt was eaten up, even Jacob himself is represented as asking his sons to go again and buy a little food.

“Then Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, ye shall not see my face, except your brother Benjamin be

with you.—Unless, therefore, thou send him, we will not go down to Egypt.” Then Jacob said unto his sons, “Why did ye tell the man that you had a brother?” And they answered, “The man did examine us closely about our kindred, and therefore we told him, for how should we know that he would bid us fetch our brother to him?” Then Judah said, very earnestly, “I pray you send the lad, that we may not all die, we and our little ones, and I will be surety for him.” And Jacob said, “If it must be so, do then as you desire. But take ye the best fruits in the land, balm and honey, and spices, and myrrh, and nuts, and almonds; and take double money in your hands, and the money that you brought back in your sacks’ mouths carry again; peradventure it was an oversight. Take also your brother with you, and God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and let Benjamin return also—If I must be bereaved of my children, there is no help for it, I must be bereaved.”

Thus did the sons of Jacob depart, all of them trembling with anxiety and fear, and using many precautions to avoid giving offence to the great person to whom they were going.

Now, this I may observe, is a picture of what sometimes happens to us. God is perhaps preparing to favour us with some great blessing, just as he was now about to favour the family of Jacob; but before he gives us possession of the blessing, he leads us through some dark and dreary path, and we fancy a great evil is coming upon us. When, therefore, God is opening the

way to these new mercies, we hang back, and say with good old Jacob, "All these things are against me." But though loth to move forward, yet what can we do? Some peril greater than that we had been dreading, awaits us, if we make more delay. With a heavy heart, with a complaining tongue, and with weeping eyes, we set forward in this path, which is, in fact, nevertheless, the path to our chief happiness. Thus do we often quarrel with our blessings. And this, I take it, is a common case; for what are all our complaints, but complaints against Providence; and do we not often murmur, even at those very dealings of Providence, which afterwards prove the most remarkable for our good?

Reader, look back to your past life; consider those seasons in it, when you have been forced, by necessity, on some unpleasant business, or when you have been hindered in your pursuit of some favourite plan, or contradicted in your opinions or your wishes. Now and then, perhaps, your situation in life has seemed quite melancholy and desperate; misery has appeared to threaten you on every side, and you have had only a sad choice of evils, just like these sons of Jacob, who thought they had only to choose between a famine at home, and the more ill usage in Egypt. And yet, has it not afterwards proved, that God was blessing you, by means of those very things, which were thought at the time so terrible?

There are many persons I am persuaded, who have even had their souls saved much in the same way in which this family of Jacob had their lives preserved. They have hung back and struggled

hard for a while, against those very things which have opened the way to their eternal salvation; they have been dragged from a life of sin and misery as unwillingly as ever Jacob's sons were dragged from Canaan, and brought into the fruitful land of Egypt. For, strange as it may sound, how unwilling are men to have their souls saved! how unwilling, at least, to take those means which are absolutely necessary for it! How many servants, as well as apprentices, and others are there, who can hardly be persuaded to attend at public worship, or at least, to give their mind to it when they are there; and yet, is not this one of the means of salvation? They must be forced to church by the authority of their masters, or by some necessity, almost as urgent as that which drove the sons of Jacob from Canaan into Egypt! Again, how many children are there, who, though invited freely to a Sunday School, nevertheless, hang back from going thither, as much as ever the sons of Jacob hung back from going into Egypt. Perhaps too, their parents have at the same time been as unwilling to part with them through some false fondness or other, as ever old Jacob was to part with his son Benjamin, though it proved afterwards to be the making of that whole family.

But let us return to the story. Joseph's Brethren set off from Canaan under a great fright, as I have already told you, and they took double money in their hand, and they carried Benjamin with them, and having come down to Egypt, they stood before Joseph. Now when Joseph saw them, and observed that Benjamin also was with them,

he ordered a great dinner to be made ready, and he asked them to come to it. And Joseph's Brethren were afraid, on account of the money which they had carried off in their sacks, and they got near to Joseph's steward, and said unto him, "O! Sir, we came down hither before to buy food, and it came to pass, that when we got to the inn, on our way home, we found every man's money in his sack's mouth, and therefore we have brought it back to you. We cannot tell who put it there, and we have now brought other money also, in order to buy food.—And the steward said, peace be to you, I had your money, and he brought Simeon out to them."

"And when Joseph came home, they drew near, and offered him the present which they brought, and bowed themselves to the earth before him. And Joseph asked them of their welfare, and said, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spake: is he yet alive? And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive; and they bowed down their heads again to the ground. And Joseph lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, and said, is this your younger brother of whom you spake to me? and then turning to the lad, "God (said he) be gracious unto thee."—Joseph now was much moved, for his bowels did yearn over his brother, and he sought where to weep, and he entered into his chamber, and wept there."

Religion does not deprive men, (as some have imagined) of their natural affections and feeling, for Joseph was a religious man, and yet how did

he overflow with kindness towards his Brethren ! It is also remarked in the New Testament, of one greater than Joseph, I mean of our Saviour, on the occasion of the death of Lazarus, that " Jesus wept." Religion regulates, no doubt, all the natural feelings of men ; but it does not destroy them.

Presently afterwards, the meat was set on table, and Benjamin's mess was five times as great as any other, and they eat and drank together, and were cheerful.

Now when the dinner was over, Joseph, who was still unknown to his brethren, commanded that all their sacks should be filled with corn, and that every one's money should again be put into his sack, and moreover, that a silver cup, being Joseph's own cup, should, together with the money, be put into the sack of Benjamin ; and when the morning was come they all went away. And before they were got far from the city, Joseph sent his steward after them, who charged them with having stolen Joseph's cup out of the house. And they immediately denied the charge, and said vehemently, With whomsoever of us it is found, we will agree that he shall die, and that we will all of us be your slaves (or bondmen) ; and a search being made, behold the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.—Then they rent their clothes for grief, and laden every man his ass, and returned to the city. And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done ? And Judah (the same who had promised Jacob that he would be surety for Benjamin) replied, What shall we say unto my lord ? God hath found out the ini-

quity of thy servants : Behold, we will now be bondmen to my lord. And Joseph said, Not so : but he in whose hand the cup is found, (namely, Benjamin) he shall be my slave or servant. But as for you, get you all away to your father in peace."

What a situation had these sons of Jacob got into now ! Could any thing be more melancholy and distressful ! " O Jacob, Jacob ! " they would say, " how shall we ever see thy face in peace, if we bring not back Benjamin with us. Well do we remember the words which did break forth from thee at parting with us : Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and now ye will take Benjamin from me."

There is one reflection to which I beg to call the minds of my readers in this place. Jacob's sons are now accused unjustly ; they are brought into trouble through no fault of theirs ; whereas, formerly, they had committed a great sin ; I mean that of selling their brother Joseph ; and had suffered no particular inconveniences from it.—They had not suffered when they did wrong, and yet now they suffer for doing right ; for they certainly, as I should think, did right in going down to buy corn for themselves and their aged father, and even in bringing Benjamin with them, under all the circumstances of the case. Let us for a moment stop here, and put ourselves in the place of these sons of Jacob. They might now, methinks, be tempted to say, " Surely, there is no righteous governor of the world ; for when we do right, we only suffer for it ; and when we did wrong, we all escaped unpunished. We will not

believe therefore in a Providence : all things happen alike to all ; this world is governed by chance ; nay, and the chance is often in favour even of the wicked." To all such profane reasoning, if I had seen Joseph's Brethren at this moment of time, I would have answered, " Stop a little, I beseech you ; do not decide so hastily, for, remember, your story is but half over. By-and-by, perhaps, your innocence in the present matter will be cleared up, and, for aught you know, your former sin, though long since committed, may come to be found out."

Let us apply this remark to ourselves. We often seem to profit for a-while by some bad thing that we have done, or at least we suffer no present punishment. Our fraud, our lying, or our act of violence, succeeds for a certain time ; and, perhaps, presently afterwards, we chance to get into trouble by doing something, which, on the whole, really seems to have been our duty. Do you never feel tempted to disbelieve in Providence on such occasions ? If you are, I would say to you, as I just now observed, that I would have said to Joseph's Brethren, Wait a-while, I beseech you. Remember, your story is but half over. Do not decide till you observe the issue. See whether in the end you will not be sorry for every bad thing you have ever done, and glad of every thing which, through God's grace, you have been enabled to do aright ; and even though this should not be the case now, it certainly will on the day of judgment.

*Joseph discovers himself to his Brethren.*

When Joseph had made this proposal of keeping Benjamin as his slave or servant, and of sending the other sons of Jacob home in peace to their father, Judah came forward, and related all that had passed in the old man's house when they were bringing Benjamin away. "My father said to us," observed Judah, "Behold I have had two sons, and the one went from me," meaning Joseph, "who is torn in pieces; and if ye take this also away, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Now, therefore," says Judah, "let me abide instead of the lad, as a bondman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; and it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die."

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him, and he bid every stranger to go out. Then Joseph made himself known to his Brethren; and Joseph wept aloud, so that the Egyptians in the house overheard him. And Joseph said unto his Brethren, I am Joseph. Doth my father yet live? And his Brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence."

No wonder that Joseph's Brethren were troubled at this speech. O! how bitter a thing is sin. It causes trouble at those moments which ought to be given up to joy. It spreads a gloom over our happiest hours; and while those who are not load-

ed with the same guilt, are giving way to the most delightful feelings, it makes the man who is burthened in his conscience to feel a double pang, to feel a pang, I mean, both on account of the sin itself, and also on account of his regret at being unable to join in the general joy that is going forward.

Joseph, nevertheless, comforts his Brethren, "Now therefore," says he, "be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, for God did send me before you to preserve all our lives, so now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." How freely does Joseph appear, by this speech, to forgive his Brethren! Here is no malice, no hatred, no spirit of revenge, no word even of reproof for all the evil they had endeavoured to do him; but the injured person is himself the comforter of those who had tried to injure him. Here, perhaps, some one may be ready to say; "True, Joseph did right to forgive his Brethren, for we are all bound to forgive them that trespass against us: methinks, however, he might as well have said something to them of their sin, for the sake of their own good." I answer, that there is a time for all things, and that this was not the time for Joseph to administer reproof. His Brethren were likely, just now, to be cast down through over-much sorrow, and the thing they needed, at this moment, was therefore comfort rather than reproof. Your people, who take all occasions to reprove, without regard to time, or place, or circumstances, though they may say they mean only to do good by it, are apt to be harsh people. They are only indulg-

ing their own spirit; and though they may persuade themselves that they are of a forgiving temper at bottom, in fact are not so much so as they think.

But I would observe further, that this extreme kindness of Joseph would, in my opinion, tend to affect the hearts of his Brethren more than the severest reproof. "What (they would now say to themselves) have we sold for a slave a brother so kind, so generous, so excellent as this! How little did we know of him when we took upon us to sell him! How rashly did we judge concerning his true character, and concerning his intention in those words which gave us so much offence! He was a better man than we, though we all talked so much against him, and even thought him hardly fit to live." I would here beg all my readers to take care how they speak evil of persons without due knowledge of their character. Especially I would advise you to beware of judging any one, on account of his having said or done something which happens to wound your own pride; or to give pain merely to yourself. He may be a good man on the whole, even though he should have erred in this particular; and you may err more by the revenge you take for what he has said that is offensive to you, than he has done by saying it. Take heed, then, lest some day or other should come when the very person whom you are set against, shall have his character cleared before all the world, in spite of every thing you have said against him. Take heed, lest you should be proved to have been the greater sinner of the two

on that day when you shall each of you appear before God, and all his holy angels. O that we could all learn something of this kind, and affectionate, and forbearing temper of Joseph! He was as remarkable for it as he was for conquering those secret temptations which I before spoke of.

Joseph having discovered himself to his Brethren, is now impatient that they should go to his father; "Haste ye," says he, "and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt.—Come down, tarry not, and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen; and thou shalt be near unto me, thou and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast, and there will I nourish thee, for there are yet five years of famine to come." "And Joseph fell on his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept on his neck." "Moreover, he kissed all his Brethren, and wept upon them, and after that his Brethren talked with him." "And the same hereof was heard in Pharaoh's house; and it pleased Pharaoh and his servants. And Pharaoh said, Bring your father and your household: take waggons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. And they did so. And Joseph gave to each of them changes of raiment; and he sent to his father ten asses, laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten more asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father, by the way."

Accordingly Jacob having been invited by his sons, and having also been encouraged by God in a dream, arrived in Egypt; and all the souls that went with him, besides his son's wives, were sixty and six.

"And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went to meet his father, and fell on his neck, and wept a long time. And Jacob said, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive. And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, "How old art thou?" And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." And Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years, and he died."

"Now when Joseph's Brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will requite us for all the evil that we did unto him. And they sent a message to Joseph, saying, that their father, before he died, commanded them to request of Joseph, that he would forgive their trespasses against him. And Joseph wept to think that they should speak thus unto him. And Joseph said, Fear not. As for you, indeed, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it for good. Now, therefore, I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them. And Joseph lived an hundred and ten years. And he said to his Brethren, God will surely visit you, and bring you

out of this land into the land which he promised to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. And Joseph died."

Thus ends the history of Joseph. I have already observed, that one of the chief things to be learned from it is the doctrine of a particular Providence. "It was not you (as Joseph said very justly to his Brethren) that sent me into Egypt; but it was God;" that is, it was not you only. Men, indeed, were the instruments, and men are accountable to God for every part of their own conduct just as much as if there was no Providence in the case. Still, however, though man may act as he pleases, yet God overrules all things, so as to bring about his own purposes. God, in this instance, had a plan in view. He had made a promise to Abraham, the grandfather of Jacob, who was the father of Isaac, that from him the Saviour should come, for that, "in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed." In fulfilment of this promise, Isaac and Jacob were born. I should here remark, by the way, that to Jacob the name of Israel was given; so that when the Scriptures speak of the Israelites, it is the same thing as if they said the children of Jacob. Of these there were twelve tribes, every one of the sons of Israel becoming the father of a whole tribe. These Israelites, after a time, were brought out from Egypt, having been very ill-treated there by king Pharaoh, and they became a great and famous people; for God wrought many miracles in the midst of them, and

gave them the law of the ten commandments, and set up his worship among them, and separated them from the rest of the world, which continued in ignorance of God and of the Scriptures. It was from these Israelites (or Jews, as they were afterwards called) that the promised Saviour came. And, blessed be God, this Saviour is not the Saviour of the Jews only, but he is now preached to us, "upon whom the ends of the world are come." How important then is the story of Joseph in this view ! It was a necessary link in the great chain of Providence, and this chain reaches from the beginning of the world even to the end of it. Nor is it with the life of Joseph only, that the Providence of God concerns itself. Your life and mine, and all the various events of it, great and small, from our birth unto our dying hour, are equally under the divine direction. The same God who sent the Ishmaelites to the pit's mouth, when Joseph was so near being left to perish there, the same God who gave Joseph favour in the sight of Potiphar his master, and who afterwards delivered him out of prison, and made him ruler over all Egypt, appoints also to us the bounds of our habitation, and orders our whole lot in life. If then, like Joseph, we are serving God, let us not fear to trust him ; and though we should fall occasionally into straits, as Joseph did, yet let us hope, when the end of our days shall come, and when the whole of our story shall be told, that we shall be able to trace the Lord's goodness and mercy even in the most afflictive circumstances of our

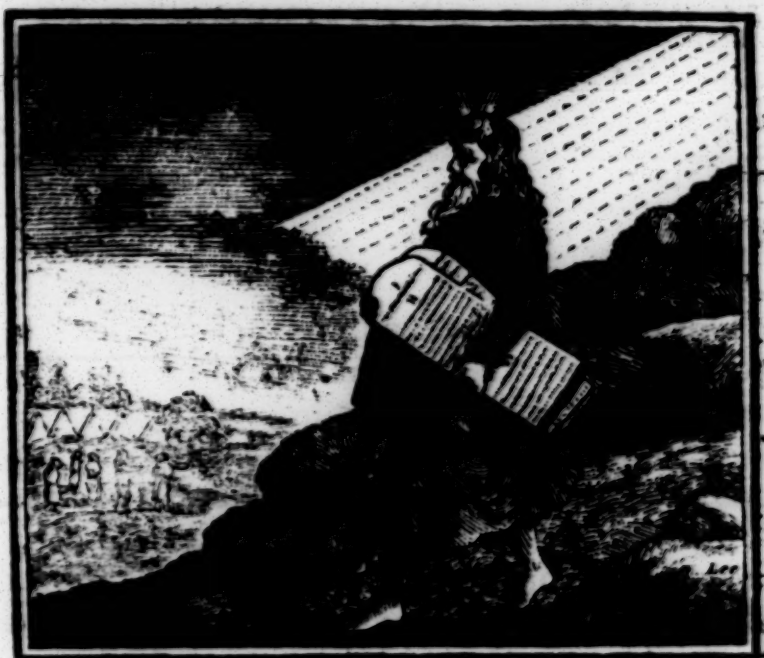
lives, as we have now been doing in the case of Joseph.

Nor let us wonder at the vast confusion and disorder which we sometimes see in the world in general. Let not our faith fail us, if now and then the wicked should seem every where to prosper, and the whole company of the righteous should come under adversity. The history of Joseph shews, that it is the plan of Providence sometimes to withdraw, in appearance, his protection and favour from his own servants, and to put off, to a future season, the evil day which is coming upon sinners. Soon, however, the time will come, when all that has been crooked shall be made straight, and all that has been dark in Providence, shall be cleared up.

The story of Joseph, as we also observed, is but a small part of Scripture ; it fills but a few pages of that large and comprehensive volume, being connected, however, with events which go before, and with those which follow after ; and just so, methinks, the history of this whole globe of ours is but like a single leaf in a great volume, and it cannot be fully understood until the dealings of God with all his various creatures shall be made known, until the whole book of his providence shall be opened, and until all those events, both past and future, with which God's government of this world may be connected, shall be fully revealed. Let us wait, therefore, in the exercise of faith and hope, remembering, as the apostle says, that while we are here below, " We

know but in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.—For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face. Now we know in part, but then shall we know, even as also we are known.”

THE  
EXPLANATION  
OF THE  
TEN COMMANDMENTS.



WE all of us are taught to *say* the Ten Commandments, but there are few of us, I am afraid, who rightly understand them, and fewer still who walk by them, and try to practise them. I may add, that there are none who do not break, more or less, one or other of the ten, and that therefore there is no man living who could bear to be judged by them.

We read in the 20th chapter of Exodus, (from whence the Commandments are taken), that God spake all these words saying, "I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage." God was here speaking to the Jews, who were of old his favourite people. The Ten Commandments were first given to them, and through them to us. We must not wonder, therefore, if we find a few expressions which suited the Jews better than they will suit us. Let us now proceed to the explanation.

#### FIRST COMMANDMENT.

"Thou shalt have no other gods but me."

This means, that we must have, or chuse to ourselves, the one true and only God of the Scriptures. Now in order to know who this God of the Scriptures is, it is plain that we must read the Scriptures, and especially the New Testament. He was the God who appeared to Moses, at Mount Sinai, and gave him all these Commandments. He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets and holy men that lived on the earth. He afterwards was still more plainly made known as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom he sent into the world to die for our sins, and he now sends his Holy Spirit into the hearts of those who call upon him. It would take too much time to enter here fully into the character of God; let us only repeat shortly a few of the many things which the Scriptures have said concerning him. He is "the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity."

“From everlasting to everlasting he is God.” He is the “Almighty:” “His wisdom is infinite;” “the light and the darkness are both alike to Him;” “He searcheth the hearts of all the children of men.” “By him actions are weighed”—yea, He “judgeth the secrets of men’s hearts.” “Our God shall bring every work into judgment, whether it be good or whether it be evil;” “for he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained;” and “then the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.” He is at the same time a God of compassion and of tender mercy. What can more strongly prove it than His sending Christ to die for us, and to offer salvation to us? “God is love.” “Not that we loved Him,” says the apostle, “but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.” He described himself to Moses as being, “the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and of great goodness, keeping mercy for thousands;” yet, at the same time, He will by no means excuse or “clear” the unrepenting and the “guilty.” Moreover let us remark, that He is the God of nature and providence; He made the world, and He now governs it. “Not a sparrow falls to the ground without his notice.” He orders the events of nations and of individuals. He doth all things both in heaven above and in earth below, “according to the council of his own will,” being righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works.

Now, therefore, let us seriously apply this subject to ourselves, and first as to our knowledge of God. Is it then in the God of the Scriptures that we believe, or in some false kind of supreme being whose character is more suited to our inclinations, and more indulgent to our sins? Do we believe in a God who will inflict punishment on the disobedient, as well as shew mercy to them that love Him and keep His Commandments—who on the one hand is ready to pardon, and “willeth all men to be saved,” and who on the other will surely condemn “the unbelieving,” as well as “plentifully reward every wicked doer?” Oh! how do men often mistake the whole character of God; some in one way, some in another, according to their various tempers, passions, interests, prejudices, and conceits!

But having learned to know God aright, do we in the next place also reverence Him, and fear Him, and trust Him, and love Him, and serve Him? Do we carry about with us at all times a holy reverence and regard to God? And as to our fear of God, I would ask, is it greater in us than our fear of man? When men require or expect us to do a thing which God has commanded us not to do, whom do we obey, God or man? that is the question. In vain do we flatter ourselves that we keep the first Commandment, if the fear of man is greater in us than that of God. Do we trust Him also? Do we trust Him, for instance, both in our prosperity, and in our adversity; and whatever befalls us, do we say that it is the Lord who hath done it, looking forward at the same time to His help in all the

future circumstances of our lives; or are we trusting in ourselves, and in an arm of flesh?

And here, above all, let us examine whether we *love* God: Do we love Him, as our Saviour, in speaking of this Commandment, expressly says that we ought to do? I mean, do we love Him “with all our heart, and soul, and strength?” Do we love Him more than we love our wealth, our pleasure, our interests, our earthly friends, or any worldly things whatever? “Whom have I in heaven but thee,” said the pious Psalmist, “and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee.” Do our hearts cleave to God as our best and most desirable portion? Is his favour all in all with us, and do we therefore seek it earnestly by prayer and by all the means through which the Scriptures teach us that it is to be obtained? And to crown all, do we obey Him and diligently serve him? “If ye love me,” said Christ, “keep my Commandments.” When we say that we love a person and yet refuse to do the things he desires us, it is loving him in word only, not in deed, or in truth. Nor is it one Commandment only that we must obey. If a man “keepeth the Commandments of God and yet offendeth in one point, he is guilty of all:” for the same God that saith, “thou shalt not commit adultery,” said also, “thou shalt not steal.” Nothing more plainly proves men to be hollow and insincere in their whole religion than their professing to serve God indeed in some things, but refusing to do it in others. Such men do not truly serve God at all.

Such is the first Commandment, and it is the foundation of all the rest. It says, "thou shalt have none other gods but me:" that is, thou shalt set up no god in opposition to me, neither thy lusts nor thy passions, neither the world nor the flesh, nor yet any false gods, such as men's own imaginations may form to themselves, nor such as the heathen fall down and worship.

#### SECOND COMMANDMENT.

"Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me: and shew mercy unto thousands in them that love me and keep my Commandments."

This Commandment was directed more particularly to the Jews. God had separated them from the surrounding nations, who were idolatrous, and had made a covenant with them, that they should not make to themselves gods, such as their neighbours worshipped, but that He should be their God, and they should be His people. He says in this Commandment, that He is a jealous God, that is, jealous of his honour. It is said in another place, "My glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." He will have no rivals in any respect. The declaration, that He would visit the sins of the fa-

thers upon the children, even to the third and fourth generation, is to be understood as a part of that national covenant which God made with the Jews. If the fathers worshipped and served Him, then the children also would continue to have Him in like manner for their God; but if the fathers went astray, and did as the heathen, then also the children, for generation after generation, were to be involved in the consequences. Somewhat in like manner, indeed, it often happens now, that children suffer through the crimes of their parents, which should be an argument with all parents, both to avoid sinning themselves, and to take care lest they draw their children into sin, and misery also.

Let us then abhor this sin of idolatry. It was one into which the Jews were continually falling; and let it be our prayer, as well as our endeavour, that all the nations of the earth, who are now sunk in idolatry, may be recovered out of it; for it is a sin highly offensive to God.

Let us ourselves keep at the greatest distance from this sin, and for this purpose it seems prudent not even to adorn our churches with images, lest any of the people, who see them there, forgetting that God is a spirit, should pay undue honour to the representation.

#### THIRD COMMANDMENT.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain.”

To take the name of God in vain is, in the strongest and worst sense of the words, to call on

God to witness a thing that is false, or in other words, to take a false oath. In many cases men are required by law to make oath of the truth of what they say. Now what solemnity and fear of God should there be in our minds on such occasions! The judge and the jury indeed may possibly not find us out, but "the Lord our God will not hold us guiltless if we thus dreadfully take his name in vain."

We may here remark by the way, that it is this fear of God, therefore, which is the chief security of the lives and properties of people in society. Now, I think, it cannot be too strongly insisted on, that it is a very solemn thing to call on God to witness any thing we are about to utter, and that, therefore, all carelessness and inconsideration in taking oaths, even though the oaths should not be false, are very sinful. There are some who take custom-house oaths in a very slovenly manner, and who say, "O, it is only a custom-house oath." Others take oaths of office just as lightly, and I believe there are some who now and then take oaths of a grave and solemn nature in their pastimes and in mere sport. But let all such weigh well those awful words; "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

The next practice we shall speak of, is that of common swearing, a sin which has not the excuse which most other sins have, of some present pleasure or profit having tempted the person to it. That awful name which angels reverence and adore, and which all good men cannot hear without a peculiar emotion, is trifled with, and in that sense, taken in vain, by a great part of our fellow-

creatures, almost every hour of every day. Some add cursing to this profane mention of the name of God, and often of the most horrid kind, and, perhaps, when they curse and swear do not know that they are doing it, which they think is an excuse, but which ought rather to be considered as a proof to what an awful pass the habit has gone. Others, equally without knowing it, use the name of God to express their surprise, or to make their conversation, as they think, more entertaining. Ah ! how dreadful will it be for such persons to have all these words brought against them as so many unexpected sins, on the day of judgment.

But it is necessary to be still more plain and particular on this head, for the very persons, who are most guilty of this sin, oftentimes cannot, or will not understand, that what is said is addressed personally to them. To prove the justice of what we are about to add, I would here first call to my reader's recollection what our Saviour himself has observed on the subject of this Commandment. "Ye have heard," said he, "how it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths ; but I say unto you, swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by the earth, for it is his footstool." To say by heavens, or good heavens (the very expression which some people use now) is thus expressly forbid by our Saviour. But not only this one phrase, which happened to be the one in common use in Christ's time, but all others of a like kind are of course by the same precept forbidden.

It is painful to mention the various ways of being profane, which irreligious men from time to time have invented; but for the sake of being understood, it seems necessary here, in some degree, to do so.—I would observe, therefore, that such phrases as the following: “Bless me,” meaning Lord bless me; “Mercy on me,” meaning Lord have mercy on me; “By Jove,” meaning by the heathen god Jove or Jupiter; “Upon my soul;” “Faith;” and a variety of others, appear all to be forbidden. “Let your communication,” says Christ, “be yea, yea; nay, nay;” that is, let your assertions be plain and simple, and not profane or violent. Let them consist as much as possible in a simple yes and no; “for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil.” Sin begins whenever we depart from this simplicity and purity of speech, and it seems even to be declared, that all those profane expressions which our Saviour alludes to, come from the wicked one.

We will close this subject with two remarks—the first is, beware of all violence and passion. Men swear often through passion. To cure men’s passion is therefore to take away one cause of their swearing; nay, remember also, that even all violent affirmations, all appeals to God or to religion which are needless, are offences against our Saviour’s rule. It is a rule which calls us all to peculiar simplicity and self-command, in our conversation. Be calm, therefore; be not loud and boisterous, but mild and gentle in your speech; and in order to keep your tongue, learn

also to keep you heart. Learn, therefore, in short, those doctrines of the Gospel which go to the correction of the heart.

My last observation is, Be serious. The world is full of people, who, in one way or other, are taking God's name in vain, and who do it, as was observed before, without thinking of it: and the reason of it is, they are not serious. They have no awe of the Divine Majesty, or of the Divine Presence. They have not felt the power of religion in their hearts. They have no reverence for God and Divine things, and hence it is that they speak so lightly of them. In vain do we multiply directions, not to use this or the other word, because it is profane: a profane mind will be ever coining new words instead of the old ones which are forbidden, and will betray a person into profaneness a hundred times a day, without his being once aware of it.

FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

“Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath-day. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt do no manner of work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, thy maid-servant, and thy cattle, and the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.”

In the New Testament, we find our Saviour observing, that “the sabbath was made for man,

and not man for the sabbath," that is, the sabbath was made to be a benefit to man, and not a burthen to him. We, who are Christians, should peculiarly rejoice in it as a benefit. What a blessing is it, in particular to the poor of this country, that there is one day in seven, on which they may rest from their work, and pass the day with their families, in worshipping and praising God, and in considering over all his mercies, as well as in examining into the manner in which they have been performing their own weekly duties. The very brutes, in part, share in the benefit, for this Commandment mercifully provides a day of rest for the ox, and the ass also.

It is proper here to remark, that some alteration has taken place, in respect to the sabbath, since this Commandment was given. The day has been changed, for we keep now not the seventh day of the week, which is Saturday, but the first, which is Sunday, because our Lord rose from the dead on a Sunday; and the name of the "Lord's Day" has for that reason been given to it. We therefore unite two purposes together, for we both rest every seventh day, as the Jews did, in imitation of God, who made the world in six days, and then rested or ceased from his work on the seventh, and we also commemorate the glorious resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who, as on this day, was raised from the dead, after having died for our sins and obtained eternal redemption for us.

Besides the difference in the day, it is natural that there should now arise some circumstances of difference in the *manner* of keeping Sunday.

The Jews, who often indeed misinterpreted their own law, thought it wrong to pluck so much as an ear of corn, or to heal a person of his disease on the sabbath day; and in many other points they were extremely strict. But we have been taught by our Saviour, that this Commandment ought not to be construed so severely by us; and it is now generally agreed, among the most serious Christians, that both works of mercy, and also works of necessity, are perfectly lawful on the sabbath day.

But let us next endeavour to explain distinctly, in what manner it seems to us, that a Christian sabbath ought, under our present circumstances, to be kept.

And first, it should be considered by us, as a day of rest from our common labour. The very laws of the land require this, by forbidding shops to be opened, and common employments to be followed on the Lord's Day, and all magistrates are obliged, by their oath, to see the laws of their country executed, in this respect. Every individual, therefore, is bound to abstain from the open violation of the sabbath, provided he reverences the laws or the public religion of his country, even supposing that he is not a Christian himself.

But Christians are called upon to keep the sabbath holy, in a much higher sense. The word holy means separate, or set apart from other days, in order to a religious use. We should, therefore, consider the sabbath as a different day from other days, and should carry that feeling habitually about with us through all the

hours of it. Even if necessity should oblige us to do some things which make a part of our common work, yet even then we should endeavour to bear in our minds all the while, that it is the sabbath. I urge this bearing in mind that it is the sabbath, because I know, that if this sentiment is in the heart, needless work will be generally avoided; but that without this, a man will not easily be kept from breaking the sabbath in one way or other.

Remember then, that all common work, which can as well be shifted to the Saturday or the Monday, becomes sinful, if done on the Sunday. Cleanliness must, no doubt, be attended to on the Sunday; but this is to be done by the preparation of Saturday. Our food must be got ready; but this may be managed with very little trouble, even in the largest families, if there is but a disposition to spare all kinds of labour on the sabbath day. There are many houses, I grant, which must not be left quite empty during divine service; but it is in general enough, if one person is left at home, who may take turns with others, so that the same individual need not always be hindered from attending public worship. There should be an universal agreement among masters and servants, and among servants also with one another, each not only to observe the sabbath himself, but to promote the observation of it among those around him.

But now to speak of what is still more material. It is of little use to abstain from bodily work, if the frame of mind is quite inconsistent with a due attention to the sabbath. This would be a

formal and jewish sabbath indeed. To comply with the form, but to neglect the spirit, is no true keeping of the Christian sabbath. It should even be remembered, that if jewish forms are in some respects left off, it becomes us to be the more careful to attend to the substance, for we are now placed under a dispensation, in which all is expected to be "spirit and life."

The sabbath, as was observed before, was made for man. It was made for his good, and more especially for his spiritual good. Whatever, therefore, tends to our spiritual benefit, is fit employment for the sabbath. Public worship has been appointed on this principle, in all Christian countries. But it is necessary, that we should not only be seen attending in our places, but that our minds also should be engaged in the service. In prayer we should feel our need of the mercies we implore; in the confession of sin, we should be affected with a sense of our unworthiness; and in offering up our thanksgivings to God, we should pour out our whole hearts before him. And when we hear the scriptures read, and the gospel of Jesus Christ preached to us, we should listen with an attentive ear, and receive the truth into an honest and good heart. When we are returning from the service, we should not discourse, as many are apt to do, about light and trifling things; but we should call up the subject which we may have been hearing of at church. We should betake ourselves also at home to the instruction of our children, to the reading of the scriptures, to family prayers, and to conversation that may have something useful in it; or if we

take our walk abroad, it should be, in order to indulge in meditation on divine things, and in order also to call, perhaps, on our more pious friends and kindred, whose conversation is likely to turn on topics suitable to the day, or to visit the sick, to comfort one that is afflicted, to do an act of kindness and charity, or to pursue some plan of usefulness proper for the sabbath, and in which we may be then regularly employed.

Such are the occupations which become a Christian on the Sunday, and uniting, as they naturally do, with the exercise of the social affections, they may well employ the whole of this sacred season; for that is a poor motley inconsistent sabbath indeed, of which one little part only is spent at church, "in building ourselves up in our most holy faith," while the rest is given up to such employments as tend to pull down what we have been building up, and to promote forgetfulness of all that we have been hearing. It is the prayer before we go to worship, and the reflection after; it is the weekly self-examination, which we at this time practise; it is the secret desires of the heart, for the favour of God; it is the humble and holy contemplation of the life, death, and resurrection, and ascension of our Saviour; it is, in short, the heavenly mind, exercising itself on spiritual objects, and shutting out those things that are worldly, which constitutes the true keeping of the sabbath. It is thus that we acquire a "hope full of immortality." "All sorrows mitigated, all cares suspended, all fears repressed, every angry emotion softened, every envious, revengeful, or malicious passion ex-

pelled:" we become on this day, partakers, in some measure, of the heavenly happiness, and learn to look forward to that never-ending sabbath, to that season of eternal "rest, which remaineth for the people of God."

And now what a privilege is the sabbath! It is often so spoken of in the Old Testament, "I gave you my sabbaths," says God to the Israelites, and then he proceeds to found a claim upon that nation for peculiar gratitude and obedience. Let us be grateful to God, that he hath, by his good Providence, preserved to us this blessed day, while, in many countries in Europe, it has been grievously profaned, and in some, entirely overthrown. Let us rejoice, that in Great Britain the law of the land still, in some measure, maintains it, though many of the people are learning to confound it more and more with the other days of the week, and are thus impiously casting off all concern for this Commandment.

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## PART II.

### FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

"HONOUR thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God shall give thee."

In the New Testament, it is written, "Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord." We there also read,

that our Saviour himself, when he was twelve years old, was subject to his parents, and in one of the following verses it is added, that "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

There is hardly any sight more pleasing than that of a little child honouring his parents, listening attentively to all that is said to him, running quickly to fulfil their wishes, and being thus "subject" or obedient to them, after the example of Christ his Saviour. And on the other hand, there are few sights more melancholy and unpromising, than that of a child who is obstinate and disobedient, who does not honour his father, nor give ear to the voice of his mother, but must be spoken to again and again, and who can hardly be brought, even by stripes, to do the thing which is commanded him.

The ill behaviour of some children, and especially of very young ones, may be considered as greatly owing to a fault in their parents; for the same law which says, "Children obey your parents" implies, that parents ought to teach them obedience. In many places, children seem to rule the house; the most important conversation is interrupted by their unseasonable noise; every one is to wait their time, and all things are rendered subject to their humors.

Now this is just the contrary to what it should be. God has ordained, that parents shall direct, and children shall obey. He has established in the world a plan of subordination, and that person who begins life by rebelling against his parents, in defiance of this Commandment of

God, will be too likely to prove a bad subject, a violent master, an ill-tempered husband, a troublesome friend, and an undesirable connection in all the later periods of his life ; whereas, a young man or woman, having for a course of years fulfilled faithfully and affectionately, and in the fear of God, every filial duty, and especially having done it under trying circumstances, has given one of the best proofs that can be afforded, of a disposition to attend to all the other obligations of relative life, and deserve to be considered, on this account, as a valuable friend, and a very desirable connection.

And now let each of my readers ask himself, how far he has fulfilled the law of God, remembering also, that it ought to be interpreted, as including all the various relative duties between man and man.

First then, have you set out in infancy with honouring your parents, both by your conduct and in your heart; neither disobeying them to their face, nor making light of them behind their back? Have you never grudged them secretly the obedience you seemed to pay, nor been in haste to assert your independence as you were growing up? If you have lost at an early age the blessing of parents, have you submitted, in like manner, to those whom God's Providence has put in their place, obeying your step-father or step-mother, your elder brother or sister, uncle or aunt? In more advanced life, have you persevered as the duty of entire submission lessened, to shew to each of those all due deference and



respect? In their old age have you endeavoured to repay them by your affection and watchful attention, as well as by your bounty, if they needed it, for all their care and tenderness, and liberality to you in your infancy and youth? Are you used to honour all your various relations in their due degrees? Have you submitted yourself to your teachers and instructors, to your spiritual pastors and masters, ordering yourself lowly and reverently to all your betters? And further, is it your practice to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, to honour the king, to obey magistrates, not accustoming yourself to speak disrespectfully of them, nor rashly censuring them in those things which you do not understand? If you are a servant, do you obey your master, not rudely answering again, and "not with eye-service only as pleasing men, but God who trieth the heart?"

How beautiful is the order of society, when each, according to his place, and in the just degree, pays willing honour to his superiors, and when the superiors regularly fulfil their several parts also: when the people reverence the king, and the king governs well the people: when the children every where are seen honouring their parents, and the parents fulfil their duty to the children: when servants are prompt to obey their masters, and masters deal kindly with their servants: when wives also and husbands, when brothers and sisters, when partners in business, when high and low, rich and poor, according to the several ranks which God has established in society: when landlord and tenant, master and

workmen, minister also and people, instead of each proudly pushing himself into the chair of his superior, sits down satisfied with his own place, and endeavours humbly and thankfully, and in the fear of God, to fulfil all the duties of it!

SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

“Thou shalt not kill.”

This Commandment is sometimes rendered, “Thou shalt do no murder;” and very properly, for all killing is not intended to be forbidden, though all murder is. Killing has, in some cases, been not only allowed, but even required in Scripture. Thus, for instance, it is written in the Levitical law—“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed;” and the putting of a murderer to death, by the regular magistracy, after a fair trial, is undoubtedly a means of preventing murder in general.

Murder means, the putting a person to death through deliberate malice; a crime which our very nature teaches us to view with great horror: but to kill a person, by striking him in a passion, without intending his death, or to kill another in a duel, or in a private battle, especially if we have been the aggressors, carries, no doubt, in it much of the guilt of murder in the sight of God. To let a person perish through neglect, whose life has been entrusted to us, as the life of a child is to a nurse, as that of all the patients in an hospital is to the apothecary or physician, well deserves also the name of murder.

I would here take occasion to notice the great sin of self-murder. We have no right over our own lives any more than over the lives of others, for we belong to God and not to ourselves; and we are exhorted in Scripture to bear even the heaviest afflictions with patience and resignation to the will of our heavenly Father, who appoints our trials for us.

It may be proper, in this place, to remark, that the enacting of laws, which are too sanguinary in their nature, and also the entering into, or encouraging of wars, which are vindictive and unjust, is unquestionably a breach of this commandment.

But we must now proceed a step further. Not only to kill is to be considered as forbidden by this law, but also to injure, or to intend to injure. This law forbids those evil and angry passions which are the seeds of murder. Cain first envied his brother, and after that he murdered him. The Pharisees first hated Christ, and after that they were the means of his being put to death. "Who so hateth his brother," says the apostle, "is a murderer." Our Saviour also finds fault with the Pharisees for explaining this Commandment so loosely as they did; and then proceeds to warn his Disciples not even "to be angry with their brother without a cause."

But again: this Commandment may be considered as not only forbidding injuries, but as commanding good-will. Christ our Saviour not only did not go about wounding and injuring men, and putting them to death, but he went about befriending them, and doing them good:

and we should, according to our opportunity, go and do likewise.

Let us, then, examine ourselves fully respecting this Commandment; for many are apt to fancy, that having never literally been so wicked as to kill any one, they have therefore no concern in it. Let us bear in mind, that we must not only not kill, but that we must not intend to kill — we must not only not hurt, but that we must not wish to hurt; and that, although therefore we should be sitting in our private rooms, and not saying or doing any thing, yet if any secret thoughts are indulged in our minds, which are to the prejudice of our neighbour; if we are allowing ourselves to indulge the least ill-will to him, we are by no means clear of the sin of breaking this Commandment. Let us reflect also, that when one thing is forbidden in Scripture, the thing contrary to it may often be considered as commanded. When injuring is forbidden, doing kindnesses, therefore, may be understood to be commanded. Instead of prejudicing our neighbour, do we then delight in doing him service? “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law, for this thou shalt not kill.” Do we then shew love to our neighbour? Do we then feel a tender concern never to hurt any one by word or deed; never to give even to the meanest of our fellow-creatures the smallest degree of needless pain and sorrow? Do we consider it as a part of our business in life to support the weak, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, according to our ability, and also to com-

fort them that are afflicted; to heal the wounds which others give, and, after the example of our blessed Saviour, to relieve the temporal as well as spiritual wants of mankind?

## SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

In this law of God, as in many of the others, the highest degree of crime is mentioned; but all the smaller degrees of it are intended also to be forbidden. Most people, no doubt, will agree, that “thou shalt not kill,” implies also, thou shalt not hurt; and that the command, to honour our father and mother, includes the honour due to those other persons whom God has placed over us: so also, “thou shalt not steal,” means, unquestionably, thou shalt in no wise defraud or cheat. On the same principle, then, we ought to understand the words, “thou shalt not commit adultery,” as implying likewise that we must not be guilty of any thing which is contrary to strict chastity. Indeed, our Saviour himself has put it out of all doubt, that we ought thus to explain this Commandment; for he hath expressly told us, that “whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” The Scriptures of the New Testament, in many places, declare strongly against unchastity of every kind; and solemnly warn us, after speaking of this and other gross sins, that “they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Those who deliberately and habitually venture on sins of this sort, would do well, therefore, to

remember, that they do it in defiance of the plainest threatenings of God; and that while they continue in such practices, they can have no hope of eternal life, for "the Scriptures cannot be broken."

It is very proper here to remark, that every Commandment of God, however strict and harsh it may seem, tends, in fact, to promote the happiness of his creatures. If mankind were allowed to indulge all their natural inclinations just as they pleased, what misery would fill the earth!

Let us now draw the picture of the wretched state of one who has broken this Commandment of God; and let us also take occasion to shew from what sort of small beginnings the ruin of a young woman may naturally be supposed to proceed.

We will imagine, then, that a young girl sets out in life with a thoughtless and giddy mind, and with a secret inattention and dislike to serious religion. We will suppose her also, having been somewhat spoiled from her infancy, to be not much used to labour, and to be, at the same time, fond of finery, or what she calls fashion and gentility, and apt to dress herself out, not perhaps always very decorously, with a view to men's admiration.

She succeeds in drawing the notice of some bad man or other, who begins to take liberties with her, insisting always that there is no harm in it. Such a man as this soon finds out that she has no very strict principles about her, and he

takes for granted that she will make no great conscience of retaining her modesty, having observed that she is not very conscientious about other matters. She is drawn away step by step: one little liberty is permitted, or perhaps invited, and then another, until she has completed her ruin. For a while she tries to conceal her shame, by lying or deceit; but it is impossible long to do it. The tale is out, her character is gone, and from this time she finds it far more difficult to get her bread honestly than before. Now also she is exposed to the rude insults of every profligate man whom she meets, and who knows her story. Being ashamed of her former friends, or having friends who are, perhaps, ashamed of her, she dwells among strangers. She has no eye to pity her, no father or mother to guard and to direct her, no husband to comfort her, no companion to soothe her, or to attend to her in distress. Being driven to extremity, and forsaken, as a young woman almost always is by her seducer, vice perhaps, by degrees, becomes her trade; and if that be the case, she lives among the vilest company. But what is worst of all, her own heart, under these circumstances, becomes every day more and more hardened. She is undone in every sense. She soon becomes diseased in body, and is still more dreadfully ruined as to her mind: and she is every day sinking lower and lower. As long as she treads this earth, woes upon woes await her, and there seems to be no glimpse of hope for her, while, in the next world, there is nothing but "a fearful looking for of fiery indignation."

There is often one circumstance in the situation of women of this sort, and especially of such as may not be so hardened as I have described, which is very affecting, and that is the state of their children, if they should have any: for what a curse do those children commonly seem to them! What a continual reproach as well as burden! There is no father to support the feeble infant, nor to provide for the mother during her lying-in. In most cases, therefore, such children are dreadfully neglected, and often perish miserably. But if their bodies are attended to, and preserved alive, how exceedingly destitute are they of instruction, and thus what danger is there lest they should perish miserably as to their souls!

Compare now the case of such an unhappy woman as has been described, with the lot of one who, having maintained her modesty, and set out in the fear of God, has become united with a christian husband, in that state of wedlock which has been appointed by the laws of her Maker. Her friends, many of them, probably, abide around her, and her husband, who is her chief earthly dependance, supports, protects, and comforts her: he commends her to God by his prayers, and he improves her by his christian counsel and conversation. Her children rise up and call her blessed. Their education engages her at home, while the father is working for the family abroad; and she feels the tenderest affection for them. She does not view them (like the other woman we described) with a tormenting

conscience, being continually reminded by them of her guilt. She is not ashamed (as the other is) of having them called by her name, but she views them as a blessing sent from Heaven, as both a comfort and a credit to her, and as a means, possibly, of support, when old age shall advance, and when both her own and her husband's strength shall fail. What a difference! How excellent then is that law of God which tends to promote such happiness as this, and to prevent the misery which was before described. Never, perhaps, did God consult more clearly the temporal comfort and well-being of his creatures than when he gave the law, which says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" and when he prohibited so effectually as he has done, in the New Testament, every species of unchastity. Instead, therefore, of saying, as wicked men are apt to do, Where is the harm of following all our natural inclinations? let us learn, on the contrary, to admire the goodness of God in this law, and to consider the libertine as one of the greatest enemies of mankind; as far more hurtful than the thief or the robber; as a rebel, in the first place, against the commandment of his God, as a hinderer of his own happiness, and a destroyer of the happiness of his fellow-creatures.

The well-being of a country depends, in a great measure, on the attention which is paid in it to the ordinance of God, respecting matrimony. It is through the institution of families that children are brought up in an orderly manner, and that the knowledge of God and of his laws is handed down from generation to genera-

tion. Villages and towns are apt to be peaceable and happy in proportion as the looser people of each sex are few, and the family-men and women are numerous in the place; and when mutiny or rebellion breaks out in the fleets or armies of the kingdom, it is on the family-men who may be enlisted in them that we more particularly depend for our security.

But some there are, perhaps, who readily allow all this, and yet their own practice is a contradiction to it. Possibly they may think that there is no such great crime committed in their case, because they take care that no one shall see them. They say to themselves, as is represented by the Psalmist, "Surely, the darkness shall cover me." "But are not the darkness and the light both alike to God?" And is there not "a day coming, when that which has been hidden shall be made known, and when God shall judge the secrets of all hearts by Jesus Christ?" "Blessed," says our Saviour, "are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." In vain, therefore, do men comfort themselves with the thoughts of privacy. God sees them now, and it is more than probable that their fellow-creatures also will, after a time, find them out, or have even detected them already, though not known to have done so, for a thousand accidents may bring the most hidden things to light. God also, in his just judgment, may see fit thus to punish, even in this world, the secret offender. Thus, in the case of David, his guilt was for a time artfully concealed, but God was pleased to make it known as a warning to others, and as a

part of the just penalty due to the two dreadful crimes which he had committed. "Thou didst it secretly," said Nathan, in the name of the Lord, to David, "but I will do this thing, (that is, I will inflict the punishment) before all Israel, and before the sun." It is here also worthy of observation, that there is no sin which men can indulge to a certain point, and which they can afterwards restrain as they please. "Who so committeth sin becomes the servant (or slave) of that sin." He that allows himself even in sinful thoughts gives the reins to his inclinations, and he little knows whither they may carry him.

Let it then be remembered, that sin is to be resisted in its first beginning, and that every thing, therefore, which may become a temptation either to a person himself or to others, is, on every principle of the gospel, to be avoided. Let all vicious curiosity be restrained in young people. Let all licentious company, let all immodest books, and all loose songs, as well as that "foolish talking or jesting," which borders on indecency, and which the apostle condemns as quite unbecoming in a Christian, be utterly avoided; and finally, let it be remembered, that decency, modesty, and propriety, as well as continual watchfulness, temperance, and self-denial, and every thing else which tends to promote purity of heart and life, may properly be considered as required of us by this Commandment.

PART III.

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

“**T**HOU shalt not steal.”

To steal is to take either by force or fraud, that which is not our own, and it is a sin which is forbidden both by the laws of God and man. It is punished in this country often even with death, and the New Testament assures us, that thieves, whom it names together with adulterers, “shall not inherit the kingdom of Heaven.” Men are commonly led into this sin through the distress, or necessity, as they are apt to call it, which has been brought upon them by their other sins. They have been first idle and extravagant, or drunken and debauched, or possibly addicted to gaming; by one or other of these means they have brought themselves into straits, and in order to deliver themselves, they have been tempted to take to thieving. Pride also, strange as it may seem, contributes often to theft. Some men, when they have fallen into distress, though possibly it may have happened, without any fault of theirs, are ashamed to own it. They think it very lowering to ask help from others, and they will not do it for the world. They will rather take secretly what is not their due, than ask openly some charitable friend to assist them. Now I conceive, that in this country, if a man can really prove his distress not to have been brought upon him by his vices, there are many

good Christians, who, if he applies to them, will take care at least not to let him starve, and there is the parish help to fly to in all cases; so that it seems difficult to state a case in which there can be any tolerable excuse for stealing.

In order then to avoid this sin, let every one keep at a distance from whatsoever leads to it; let him keep clear of idleness and debauchery, and extravagant living, and above all of gaming. And if unhappily he has already got into trouble, either through any of these vices, or through misfortune, let him be afraid of that false shame, and of that hurtful pride, or spirit as it is called, which will not permit him to own what has passed, and to apply to his friends and neighbours.

Let another caution here be given. The sin of downright theft is what men commonly come to by degrees. A man, for instance, who cheats his master, or superior, of money which has been intrusted to him for some special service, commonly begins merely by borrowing, as he calls it (though without leave) some small part, perhaps, of the money of his employer. He says to himself, "I will borrow this only for a day or two, and then I will replace it;" but a practice of this sort being once allowed, he goes a little further and a little further. Large sums are at length misapplied; for it is more than probable that his necessity encreases on him: and now, perhaps, he takes money to himself, when there is no chance of his soon restoring it, or even of his ever doing so. He is become a thief almost before he is aware of it. At last, after trying by various shameful arts to conceal

the state of his accounts, and thus adding sin to sin, he is found out, and even though he should not be punished in the same way as other thieves are, yet he is no doubt as guilty as they, and he is pretty sure at least to lose his character and his employment.

There are others again, who have, after a while, become finished rogues, by allowing themselves at first to steal things which they have thought very insignificant and trifling. They have not considered, that to steal a little thing may be a great crime, and that this is one very common road to robbery, burglary, and to all kinds of wickedness.

Children, therefore, should be taught from their very earliest years to keep their hands from picking and stealing. The children of the rich should be instructed, that to pick fruit out of a garden, to take sweetmeats, or any other thing from a shelf, a table, or a closet, is a breach of this Commandment: and the children of the poor ought in like manner to be told, that to take the turnips out of a field which is not their own, or the stakes out of a hedge, or the apples which are lying in an orchard, is the road to greater thefts, and is a sin both against God and against their neighbour.

Servants need to be on their guard against temptations of the same sort. If they would be strictly honest, they as well as children must bring their appetites under subjection; they must take care not privately to taste any thing which is not intended for them; neither should they give away meat or drink to any persons to whom

they dare not acknowledge that they gave it, nor in greater quantities than they would care to own. I will add, that they ought never to expend their master's money in any way whatever that is contrary to his wishes. Some servants are apt to do this for the sake of maintaining, as they call it, the credit of the family, when the master is not at all desirous of that sort of credit, but thinks, perhaps, that the expence or show made in the housekeeper's room or kitchen is a great disgrace to him. Every master's money is certainly his own, and an honest housekeeper, or other servant, will feel himself bound to consider only how he may best fulfil the expressed or implied wishes of his master in every-part of the expenditure intrusted to him. For a servant to take perquisites which he does not avow, because, perhaps, he dares not, is another practice hardly reconcilable to exact integrity; for though taken in the first instance from the tradesman, the amount, or, perhaps, more than the amount is charged in one way or other to the master, so that the servant should consider himself as taking it from the master, whose leave, therefore, he should have for doing it.

I am aware that a steward, or housekeeper, who acts up to these principles, may be exposed possibly to much reproach from those under him, and to many difficulties, to all which I have only to answer, that he who will act a Christian part, and endeavour to obtain the favour of God, must run the risk now and then of losing the favour of his fellow-creatures, and must himself become an example of self-denial also. That steward or

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housekeeper, it is to be feared, is not very honest, however he may pride himself on his integrity, who has never yet combated any common customs of families, and has never been charged by any one with being too particular.

In buying and selling nothing is more usual than for each side to try to over-reach the other, and it is little considered that to do this is, in other words, to steal or cheat. Let me now suppose, for argument's sake, that I have nine sheep to sell, and that having pretended there are ten, I take the money for ten, and mistake or ignorance of the buyer being so great that he does not find me out. "Oh, how scandalous! every one would say: this is downright cheating; this is robbing the other man of the value of one sheep. It is what any one ought to be hanged for." Well then, as this is not a reputable mode of cheating, being not a very common one, nor indeed a very easy and practicable way neither, I can effect the same purpose in the following manner: I have only to pretend that each sheep is about one-tenth better than it is, that it is one-tenth fatter, and heavier, and finer flavoured, and older; I have only to give my word for it, that, for some reason or other, the sheep are each of them worth one-tenth more than in fact they are, and then, if I succeed in my attempt, it is plain that I shall get the value of one sheep more than my due, just as much as if I cheated in the other way.

To deceive in selling a horse, to cry up his virtues, but to say nothing of his faults, and to endeavour to get as much money for him with all his faults as if he had no faults at all, is just in like

manner to cheat or steal. To put false marks upon goods, in order to make them appear to be the manufacture of some person in repute, who did not really manufacture them, or even to give a false outside appearance to them, or to call them by a false name, or, in short, to say any thing of them which is known by ourselves not to be true, in order to recommend them, is clearly an attempt to cheat, and is a breach of this Commandment.

On the other hand also, the way which some buyers take in order to get what they call a good bargain, although they may be very proud of it, is often little better than stealing; they cry down the thing they want to buy, and pretend to see a thousand faults in it, not fully believing all they say; and as to the excellencies of it, they utter not a word; and when perhaps they have driven a poor necessitous shopkeeper, or other dealer, down to their price, affecting all the while to think the thing shamefully dear, they go away and tell their neighbours what a bargain they have got. This practice is as old as Solomon's time, "It is naught, it is naught, says the buyer, but afterward he boasteth."

In settling the wages of labour, there is often much fraud attempted on each side. When a workman or servant pretends to do more work than he really performs, when he spends more idle time than his master knows of, and yet claims the same wages which are due to one that is diligent, he then on his side may be said to cheat or steal; and, on the other hand, when a master works a servant hard and pays him little; when

he takes advantage of the man's willingness and good-nature, or of his modesty and simplicity; whenever, in short, a master fails to raise his servant's wages according to his deserts, then the master may be said to cheat or steal. "Give unto your servants," says the Apostle, "that which is just and equal." There is a certain point, which may be called the point of justice and equality between man and man, which each side should aim at, and in proportion as this is missed, one or the other party fails in the strictness of his integrity.

To smuggle, is undoubtedly to cheat or steal; nothing can be more clear than this, and it is also forbidden in Scripture. "Render," says our Saviour, "to Cæsar, the things which are Cæsar's." We are to pay "custom to whom custom is due, tribute to whom tribute is due." Our Saviour chose rather to work a miracle than to fail in paying tribute himself, and yet he did not live under the best of governments. It is the law of the land which decides to whom property shall belong in a vast variety even of questionable cases; and both the law of the land and natural justice are against the smuggler; for it is to be remembered, that if we pay less duty than the law requires, some other subject or subjects must necessarily pay more, and to smuggle, therefore, is to take money, not from government merely, as some selfish and half-thinking people suppose, but from the pockets of these other subjects.

It would be easy to add many other cases, and to prove that even this Eighth Commandment (the one which we are the most apt to make our boast of keeping) is broken by all ranks of people,

at least in the spirit of it, almost every day : for let us consider only for a moment, what a leaning there is in every man towards his own side, whenever any question of property is to be decided between him and his neighbour. We are sure to over-rate our own labour and our own skill, as well as our own general merit, and we expect to have the price of things adjusted, and all the affairs of the world arranged, according to this false view of the matter which we have taken ; and of course we in the same degree under-rate the labour, skill, and merit of other people. Inordinate selfishness is one of the most common and natural dispositions of man, and this selfishness, by producing a constant partiality to our own side, is the necessary source of frauds innumerable ; and it is worthy of remark, that while this spirit of selfishness reigns in us, we shall not only be always trying to wrong others of their due, but we shall also be trying to wrong them without knowing that we do so.

And now what a view does this consideration give us of this state of the world in respect to all matters of property ! What wrongs are all men committing, naturally, as it were, on their neighbour, without being sensible of it ; or at least what wrongs are they attempting to commit, though unable each to execute his purpose ; for undoubtedly it will often happen that the unreasonable claims of one side, being opposed by the unreasonable claims of the other, the two parties may hit on a pretty fair medium in consequence of the struggle, and whenever fortunately things are settled fairly in this way, it is well if both sides do

not go away complaining how hardly they have each of them been used. Such are the effects of that partiality to ourselves which has been spoken of.

Would we then lay the axe to the root of the tree, and avoid habitual injustice, we must cure this selfishness of spirit. But how is the cure to be effected? I answer, that our Saviour has instructed us in the very point in question, by giving us the following golden rule, "whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." Let then the buyer put himself in the place of the seller, and the seller in that of the buyer; let the master suppose himself the servant, and the servant imagine himself the master; let each put himself in the place of him with whom he has to deal; let him, as it were, plead before himself the cause of his opponent or rival; let him become counsel for a while on that side, and he will find his partiality for himself wonderfully corrected. Let it, in short, be a rule with all of us never to determine a case between ourselves and our neighbours, till we have very deliberately and dispassionately weighed it in this manner.

NINTH COMMANDMENT.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."

To bear false witness against our neighbour, means, strictly speaking, to swear falsely against another in a court of justice. How careful should every one be who is called up as an evidence in a public court to speak "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." He should

recollect himself before he begins to give his information ; he should speak without heat or malice, and without prejudice or partiality ; and he should remember that even a small error in his evidence, a mistake, for instance, in a place or date, may possibly be the means of fixing an unjust charge, and of taking away the reputation or property, nay, even the life, of a fellow-creature. A witness ought neither to speak falsely in favour of the accused person, nor falsely against him. To do the one, is to bear false witness against the person accused, and to do the other, is to bear a sort of false witness against the prosecutor, and perhaps also against other witnesses in the cause. To do either is to hurt the public, who are all of them our neighbours, and who are more interested than is commonly considered, in having a fair and full testimony given in every case.

My readers, no doubt, will very readily agree, that we ought to take the utmost care thus to speak truth in a court of justice. I am afraid, however, there are few people who consider, that exactly in the same manner it is our duty to speak truth of our neighbour in private company. This Commandment is against all sorts of false testimony. It condemns the private slanderer and tale-bearer, and the magnifier of stories against his neighbour, as well as the perjured person.

Some people are apt, from the very levity of their character, to take up every light rumour against another. "Somebody has told them (but they cannot exactly recollect who) that there is some very bad story against such a person:" though they scarcely know what it is, they proceed to tell

it, and they supply, by their own invention, such parts as seem necessary in order to make the tale hold together, and then the whole goes abroad on the same authority.

Some are apt to grow warm as they are telling a story, and are continually led by this warmth of theirs to overstate a fact, and often, therefore, to charge guilt much too heavily on him whom they censure.

Again, vanity is a motive which leads many into falsehoods. They find they cannot excite attention unless they magnify what they say, and they are very ambitious of being able to surprize, to interest, and to entertain their hearers; they prefer wit to truth, and they cannot resist the pleasure of uttering a sarcastic jest, and of distinguishing themselves by a lively turn of speech, though at the expence of candour and of justice.

But, perhaps, the most fruitful of all the sources of false testimony and misrepresentation, is that spirit of envy and malice, and of jealousy and pride and self-preference, which, unless it is closely watched, is apt to be incessantly at work in every human breast. Some one is supposed either to have injured us, or to be now against us, or in some respect or other to stand in the way of our advancement, or some one is thought to claim the superiority over us, and seems to possess a greater share of the affection and countenance of one with whom we wish to be the chief favourite. We are prepared to believe an evil story against such a man on very slight evidence, and not only to believe it, but to spread it eagerly, and to ex-

aggerate it exceedingly. On the other hand, we extol him that is on our side, for this is indirectly to praise ourselves; but let a man be our enemy, or let him only be of a contrary sect to us in religion, or of an opposite party to us in politics, how strong then is our disposition to become partial in all our judgment, and through the prevailing power of this prejudice, to be continually bearing false testimony against him!

Now, in many of these cases, it may possibly happen, that it is only some slight exaggeration that is made, or some little fact that is added, and yet, that these little matters may make a world of difference, for they may constitute even the whole of the guilt. It is to be recollected also, that stories circulate through many hands; and that if a little addition is made by each, an anecdote, which was hardly worth notice at first, may soon grow up into a most mischievous and scandalous falsehood.

How numberless are the lies which are in this manner spread abroad in the world, and how enormous is the evil of which we are now speaking! Who then is the person, on whom the guilt ought to be fixed? Undoubtedly, all are guilty who have had a share in the exaggeration. All random talkers, all light, unthinking, and, on that account, inaccurate people; all violent and passionate people; all vain people, who seek only to be admired for what they say; and especially all envious and jealous people, which those never fail to be, who are aspiring and ambitious, together with all partial, bigoted, and prejudiced people—every one of these, I fear, is apt to be

every day a breaker of this Commandment; and so indeed are all, who have not yet learnt to exercise a tender conscience in what they say, and to set a guard upon their lips, even in their hours of relaxation; for let it be remembered, that there are many who may not intend unjustly to prejudice their neighbour's reputation, but who, nevertheless, by indulging prejudices and fancies, and by being too inaccurate in general, in respect to truth, are for ever casting unfair blame on some character or other, and are contributing largely to increase that quantity of false testimony which is circulating in the world.

There are some persons who attempt to avoid the fault of evil speaking, by running into an opposite extreme; they refuse to tell the faults which they really know, and which it is important to reveal; and they do this on the most selfish principle, namely, lest they should bring themselves into trouble: their custom is to praise every body; and they think, that if they always speak handsomely of others, then others will agree to speak handsomely of them. We must beware, however, of imagining that these are the persons who pay obedience to this Commandment, and that their selfish policy, and misplaced commendations deserve any praise; as well might the witness in a court of justice, who gives false evidence in favour of the person accused, take credit for his perjury, or the witness who refuses to give evidence at all, take credit for his silence, when the public interest requires that he should speak out. It is truth and candour, not flattery and false

praise, nor universal silence, respecting the characters of men, which are required by this Commandment.

There are also many, who, through their own ignorance of the nature of true goodness, are apt to praise the most irreligious characters; and who are ready to charge every religious person with that very prejudice and indisposition to false testimony, which I have been condemning, because he cannot join in the praise. But let flatterers of this class be told, that all those who are irreligious, are considered as wicked, in the word of God, and that (as Solomon has said) "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord."

But to return. The practice of tale-bearing is so common, and it leads to so much false testimony against our neighbours, that I propose now, to warn my readers particularly on this head; and I will do it, by subjoining a few questions, which every one should be prepared to answer, before he ventures to repeat any tale to the prejudice of another.

First then, how did you hear the story? From an actual witness of the fact, or from one that heard it of another? If it came to you only through the second or third hand, pray suspend a little of your belief, till you have heard the truth more exactly, from a more unquestionable authority.

Consider next, how far even the eye or ear witness, who may have told it you, is worthy of credit; whether, for instance, he is an enemy of

the accused, or can have an interest in lowering his character; whether he is credulous, or passionate, or prejudiced; and whether his memory, in some particular, at least, may not have failed him.

Consider, also, whether, allowing the whole which has been told you to be true, there may not have been something omitted, that ought to have been added, the addition of which would make a great difference in the general impression.

Consider well, also, whether you yourself, in listening to your informer, have been quite free from prejudice, and have avoided every error. It is possible, that you may innocently have mistaken some doubtful expression; for in every language there are ambiguous words, and what is said by the speaker, rather loosely or figuratively, is sometimes understood by the hearer much too literally and strictly.

It may be well to examine also, whether, notwithstanding the authority on which it stands, there may not be some such contrarieties in different parts of the story, as to render it quite impossible. But even if it should be highly improbable; if, for instance, it should contain a charge which is contradicted by the general character of the accused, a candid man will not be confident in his belief. Endeavour, therefore, in general, to know the character of the accused person before you spread a report to his disadvantage; and if he is reputed to be religious, be

particularly suspicious of the tales against him, for the world is apt to revile men of this cast.

Enquire also, whether the person charged has ever been charged to his face. Possibly, quite a new light might be thrown on the matter, if the accuser would but consent to meet the person accused, face to face. If you are purposing to repeat the story, it is a good general rule, to tell it first to the person supposed to be in fault.

And lastly, supposing the fact clear, ask yourself what is the use of telling it. Be sure not to tell it from talkativeness, or from secret envy, or from party prejudice. Undoubtedly, there may be good reasons for speaking out, especially when the crime is very serious. The public should be warned against imposition; the character of men also ought, in a variety of cases, to be made known, and if given at all, it ought, undoubtedly, to be fairly given. Be as tender, however, as you possibly can of your neighbour's reputation, and speak against him with regret, not with readiness and satisfaction. Say nothing in heat, for if you do, you will exaggerate. And do not let the story stand on your own credit, but choose rather to let it stand on the credit of him who told it you, and be always willing, therefore, (if permitted) to give up your authority.

And now to close this subject, let it ever be remembered, that the love of our neighbour is the great thing which is necessary, in order to our fulfilling this Commandment. "Love," as was before remarked, "is the fulfilling of the law; for this, thou shalt not bear false witness." If men did but

love their neighbours as themselves, they would then be jealous of their neighbour's reputation, just in the same manner as they now are of their own; and a thousand rules and instructions on this subject might be spared. We do not commonly spread false reports against our own wife, or child, or sister, or brother; and the reason is, that we love our own kindred. Let us then learn to love all men as brethren, and let this Commandment send us to that gospel which so strongly inculcates good-will and charity towards our fellow-creatures.

TENTH COMMANDMENT.

“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man servant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.”

Most of the other Commandments speak of the outward action, and forbid some sin in the life, but this last lays the ax, as it were, to the very root, for it forbids even those covetous desires which are seated in the heart. It is said, “Thou shalt not covet any thing which is thy neighbour's.” What is it then that we most like? The taste of people differs. One is in danger of coveting his neighbour's money; another, his neighbour's consequence and power; a third, of coveting the praise and honour which he sees given to another. How apt, especially, are many of the poor, to covet all the comforts and supposed enjoyments of the rich! They have pecu-

liar cause to beware of breaking this Commandment. Both rich and poor, however, are apt to covet the possession of any thing for which they happen to have a taste. They no sooner behold it, than they are ready to cry out, "I wish it was mine."

It is melancholy to think how few there are in the world who are thoroughly contented with their lot. The young and the old, the rich and the poor, the married and the unmarried, the prosperous and the afflicted, are all of them apt to have some unsatisfied desire. There is always some one thing at least, which is possessed by our neighbour, and which Providence has denied to us, and we are disposed to fix our whole attention on that single point. If we are under no temptation to covet our neighbour's house, nor his wife, nor his man servant, nor his maid servant, yet we covet, perhaps, some ox of his, or some ass, some inferior thing or other in which we happen to take delight; and we may possibly be as wretched at the thought of not possessing it, as if we had coveted his whole fortune and estate. Thus Ahab, although he was king of all Samaria, being unable to get the little vineyard of Naboth, which would have made him a convenient cabbage garden, "laid him down on his bed and refused to eat." Ahab was as unhappy as any poor man in Samaria, who might be at that time envying the king, and coveting the possession of his whole kingdom.

Now all this complaining and dissatisfied spirit is forbidden in the Tenth Commandment; and the things required by it are, thankfulness and

contentedness of heart, patience under trials, resignation under afflictions, a mind free from envy and repining, and a spirit of submission to the whole will of God. How eminently did St. Paul possess the temper which I have been describing. "I have learned," said he, "in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content, for I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

This Commandment, as was observed before, is extremely strict, because it applies immediately to the heart. It will effectually convict every man of being a sinner, who will pay attention to it. We can regulate our actions, perhaps, tolerably well; we can maintain our character; we can do every thing with such an appearance of propriety and exactness, that our fellow-creatures can hardly discern a flaw in us. But which of us duly regulates his heart? To call away our thoughts from every forbidding thing, to govern well our various affections and desires, and to fix them always in their due degrees on their lawful and proper objects; to suppress even the wish for what God sees not fit to give; to wait his time, to leave all to his providence, and to consider all his appointments as ever wise and good; to purify, in short, the secret springs of action, and "to bring, as the Scriptures express it, every imagination into subjection to the obedience of Christ;" this is the great point.

To the heart then, to the heart, and not merely

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to the actions of the life, let our attention be directed. Thousands, it is to be feared, have been sinners all their days, and have nevertheless been quite unsuspecting of their sinful state, because they have looked no further than to their outward actions, and have never examined duly into the motives of their conduct, nor watched the secret motions of their hearts. Through this cause they have continued ignorant of God, ignorant of themselves, and ignorant of that salvation which has been provided by the gospel.

Thus have we endeavoured to explain these laws of God. And here let me ask, whether any one can deny the perfect excellency of them? Are they not such as it is fit for God to give, and for man to obey? We have shewn that love to God and love to man form the foundation of them all. And yet who can deny that he has disobeyed them every day? Now it is one great object of these laws of God, to convince men of their guilt, and thus to prepare them for the grace and mercy of the gospel. "Cursed," says the Scripture, "is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." But "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "The law therefore is our school-master to bring us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith." "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." But we are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus," and thus "we obtain peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Man, then, is to be considered as a criminal under sentence of condemnation. God's righteous law has already condemned him. God nevertheless hath "so loved the world as to send his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."


But this faith in Christ is so far from leading men to neglect that holy law which we have been explaining, that it becomes a new motive to obedience; for the Christian now receives, as it were, again from the hand of Christ, those same Commandments which were first given to man through the hand of Moses. He receives them from that Saviour who died for him. "If ye love me," said this merciful Redeemer to his Disciples, "keep my Commandments." It should here indeed be observed, and it is a point which has been partly proved already, that the precepts, which are given by Christ and his apostles in the New Testament, as the rule of life for every Christian, are, for the most part, the very same in substance, and are sometimes expressed in the same words as the law of the Ten Commandments, for it is the object equally of the Old Testament and of the New, to bring back the corrupted heart of man to the love of God and of his neighbour. The Christian, therefore, is one who studies diligently, and observes carefully, all the Commandments of God and of his Saviour: day by day he exercises himself in examining his life by them; he brings all his actions, great and small, and his very thoughts and desires,

to this test. He prays for grace to walk agreeably to that will of God, which he finds revealed in the several parts of the holy Scriptures, and the very knowledge of his redemption constrains his heart to obedience. Still, indeed, his best services are imperfect, and he understands so well the great extent of his duty, that he discovers much corruption in himself, where another man would not at all discern it. He therefore does not trust in his good works, though he is diligent in them, and sees the necessity of performing them. The language of his heart may be well expressed by a quotation from a judicious and eminent divine of the last century. "We can do nothing," said he, "that is meritorious and worthy to be rewarded. God, indeed, doth liberally promise whatever pertains to a blessed life, to as many as sincerely observe his law, though they be not exactly able to keep it. Wherefore, we acknowledge a dutiful necessity of doing well, but the meritorious dignity of doing well, we utterly renounce. We see how far we are from the perfect righteousness of the law; the little fruit which we have in holiness is, God knoweth, corrupt and unsound; we put no confidence at all in it; we challenge nothing in the world for it; our continual suit to God must be, to bear with our infirmities, and pardon our offences."

# DANIEL

IN THE

## DEN OF LIONS.



THE Babylonian empire was one of the most extensive and powerful in the ancient world. Nebuchadnezzar, one of its kings, having conquered Judea, had carried away Daniel along with many other captives to Babylon; and he afterwards raised him, on account of his great wisdom, to the highest post in the government. In this station Daniel continued during the long term of sixty-five years, till at length Babylon was taken, and Belshazzar, who was at that time its king, was slain by Darius, king of the Medes and Persians. An account of this may be seen in the fifth chapter of Daniel, in which is contained the remarkable description of the handwriting upon the wall.

Darius, having thus become king over an immense territory, began to take proper measures to secure his government. He divided the kingdom, therefore, into one hundred and twenty parts, over each of which he appointed a governor; and over these he placed three presidents, who were to superintend the whole affairs of the kingdom.

At the head of these presidents, we find the name of Daniel. This is remarkable, whether we consider the nation to which he belonged, the religion which he professed, or the employment he formerly held. His nation was that of the Jews, which was then in the greatest disrepute; his religion, though it was the true one, was accounted the grossest superstition; and his employment, as has been already stated, had been that of prime minister to the monarch, whom Darius had fought against, and at length dethroned. Nay, it was probably owing to the counsels of Daniel, that Babylon had been able to resist, as it did for near twenty years, his victorious arms. What a testimony was it to the great worth of Daniel, that his conqueror could find no person more proper with whom to entrust the chief concerns of his empire!

Daniel, as the Scripture observes, "was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him." The excellence of his *wisdom* appears, from his being esteemed, when he was but two and twenty years old, above all the wise men of the east. His wisdom even became proverbial; and therefore, while he was still a young man, the prophet Ezekiel (in the xxviii<sup>th</sup> chapter, and 3<sup>d</sup> verse) reproves the vanity and presumption of the king of Tyre, "who said in his heart, that he was even wiser than Daniel." Such was also the excellence of his *piety*, that we find him honoured with the highest attestations to his worth from the mouth of God himself. He is ranked, even though still living, with Noah and Job, those men of the

highest eminence ; and it is declared of Jerusalem, in order to indicate the greatness of her guilt, that God would not spare her, " even though Noah, Job, and Daniel were in her." Surely, no other person in the whole compass of life ever had such honourable attestations to the " excellence of the spirit which was in him."

" Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel, concerning the kingdom, but they could find none occasion nor fault, forasmuch as he was faithful ; neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, we shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God."

No virtue is so great, no station is so high, as to be free from envy. And we know little of human nature, if we suppose that the many illustrious captains and princes, who had shared with Darius in all the difficulties and dangers of his conquests, would bear, without jealousy and indignation, to see preferred before them, a stranger, a captive, a Jew, and an enemy. This Daniel was appointed also to inspect their conduct, and to him they were to account, " that the king might have no damage !" Would these high-spirited commanders and princes bear this ? No wonder that they sought occasion against him. But here is a fresh testimony to the worth of this illustrious man ; that even they, when their anger and envy conspired to render their search keen and minute, could find no fault in him. What ! when he had been prime minister of the largest empire in the world, for sixty-five years, and his conduct

was scrutinized with a jealous eye, could no instance of treachery or dishonesty be found in him? Amidst so many men as must have been disappointed in their expectations under his administration; so many delinquents as must have been detected by his vigilance, and punished by his justice; was there none who could step forward with the welcome discovery of some flaw in the conduct of this great man! No. "He was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." Yet there was one part, it seems, of his character, which gave them hopes of finding occasion against him. His attachment to his religion had been long observed, and it was justly concluded, that if he could be brought into such circumstances, that his duty to the state and to religion should clash with each other, then his adherence to religion must be construed into a crime against the state, and bring on his condemnation.

How does the character of Daniel rise still higher and higher, the more we contemplate it! His enemies (and if Daniel had enemies, let no one flatter himself with the hope, that greatness and piety will secure him from them)—his enemies could find nothing upon which to found their schemes for his destruction but his piety. Upon his piety they were to depend for the success of their plots. What an honour put upon his regard to religion!

We may observe here, that no situation in life, no multiplicity of business, no vexatious cares, no elevation of rank, can excuse a man from attention to the duties of religion. For we see Daniel,

living in the midst of a most dissolute and luxurious court, bearing himself the chief burden of government, and yet retaining his piety as sacredly as if he had been dwelling in a desert. Nay, it was his regard to his duty to God which enabled him to discharge so faithfully his duty to the state: had he not been so truly religious, there would, doubtless, have been found some blame or occasion against him. No time is lost by prayer. No advantage is gained by neglecting to seek the help and blessing of God. Could we see the influence which a strict regard to religion would have upon every part of our conduct, we should find, as in the case of Daniel, that it would be our best preservative against folly as well as against sin, and would enable us to go through the most complicated business with honour and integrity.

“Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him: King Darius, live for ever! All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors and the princes, the counsellors and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king! he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king! establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.”

Happy are we who live under a government so much more just, and in times so much more

enlightened, that the proposal of such an absurd and impious law appears almost incredible. We must recollect, that it was proposed in an eastern country where flattery was carried to a height which nothing could induce us to credit but the concurrent testimony of all historians. The law which I have just mentioned was, with respect to the king, one of the most artful pieces of flattery. It seemed to intend nothing but the confirmation of his power, and the advancement of his glory. His power was so great, extending over one hundred and twenty provinces, his wealth so unbounded, increased as it was by the treasures of Babylon, his bounty so large, that there could be no occasion, it seems, to ask favours of any man but of him. To forbid favours to be requested of any other, was to invite all to come to him. And with respect to the petition forbidden to be made to any gods, it may well appear strange indeed to us; but if we consider the variety of gods worshipped in Babylon, most of whom were idols of wood and stone, and the adoration which was accustomed there to be paid to their kings, we shall have less reason to wonder, that the impiety of the proposal did not shock a monarch flushed with extensive conquest. The king, therefore, gratified by this distinguished honour, which all the presidents, the governors, the princes, the counsellors, and the captains had consulted to pay him, readily signed the writing and the decree.

Doubtless, the matter was known to Daniel before the royal signature was obtained; and the malicious purpose, which it was intended to an-

swer, could not be concealed from him. Some also of those princes and governors, there probably might be, who were too just not to withstand such an iniquitous proposal, and some too much obliged to Daniel to consent to it; but they might be afraid of appearing, while they were defending an injured man, to oppose the honour of the king, and the generality would but too readily agree to it, supposing that Daniel was a falling man, unable to stand against such powerful enemies. Thus no effectual opposition was given to the proposal, and the destruction of Daniel seemed to be fixed and inevitable.

It pleases God to try, in an extraordinary way, the faith of his most faithful servants. Let no man, therefore, repine at his trials, however severe; they may be the means of calling forth, and purifying his grace; and the more severe the trial, the more conspicuous the grace of God which supports under it. Daniel was now placed in a most critical situation. He knew of his danger, and was sensible that the eyes of the whole kingdom would be upon him. Let us imagine we hear him reasoning with himself upon the occasion.

On one side, he might argue, not only the natural love of life, but even the regard I owe to the welfare of this great empire, and still more to the interests of my captive countrymen, and of the church of God, require me to use all prudent means to preserve myself from the snares of my enemies. Here is a law made with the wicked design of destroying an innocent man. Shall I suffer that wickedness to succeed, when I

can so easily prevent it? I may retire for thirty days into the country; or I may at least conceal for that time, the *open profession* of my religion. In this I shall commit no positive evil: I shall not even be guilty of the omission of a duty, for I may *in secret* worship God as devoutly as ever; and he looks at the heart, and knows my integrity. I shall only prudently conceal what I am not absolutely required to proclaim, and that too in just reverence of a law which my sovereign has been pleased to enact.

On the other hand, we may suppose him to reply to himself, "And what, shall such a man as I shrink from my duty? Must I begin to be afraid, and to cling to life at the age of eighty-seven? Shall it be said, that Daniel loved the dregs of life, and the remnant of his power too well to be willing to sacrifice it for the sake of his religion and his God? Shall my example be brought to justify the timid, or the lukewarm, or the temporizer? Is it not the highest honour to suffer for God? Does not such an edict as this call upon every one to stand forward with boldness, and to declare his adherence to God? What is it to serve God in prosperity? It is when we incur reproach, or are exposed to the loss of life, that we have the opportunity of proving that our profession of regard to God is sincere. It is enough. Gladly, O my God! I offer up to thee, the giver of my life, the short remainder of it. Receive thy servant, and give grace to all thy people in this large city, to manifest an inviolable attachment to thy worship."

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was

signed, he went into his house, and his windows being opened in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."

It was the custom of every religious Jew to offer up particular worship to God, at the hour of the morning and evening sacrifice; the window was then opened towards Jerusalem, and the face directed that way, in order to manifest communion with the saints then worshipping in the temple, and to be partakers of the benefit of the sacrifices and prayers then offered up, according to the promise made by God to Solomon, at the dedication of the temple. Daniel, therefore, when he retired at those hours, and opened his window towards Jerusalem, made no ostentatious display of his religion, but only fulfilled one of its positive precepts, and complied with the ceremonies it required.

Methinks I see this venerable man, when the appointed hour of prayer approaches, rising up from the seat, on which he sat, in the midst of the presidents, and princes, and counsellors, and captains, who were sitting round him, and observing him with anxious looks. Methinks I see him walking through the midst of them, with an air of dignity and serenity which nothing but innocence and faith in God could inspire; while his enemies retire on each side, abashed by his awful presence.

He is gone. They well know where, and for what purpose. They follow him to his closet, and there behold him kneeling upon his knees, with

his hands and eyes uplifted to God. Not even is the usual posture varied, though the varying it, possibly, might have saved his life.

Behold the holy man upon his knees! What fervency would there be in his supplications! How would the thought of his situation, the trial he had to encounter, his instant appearance before God in judgment, the nearness and the awfulness of eternity affect his mind! With what ardour would he implore grace to support him! With what earnestness would he profess the obligation he owed to give up his life, whenever his Creator called for it. With what importunity would he intercede for his friends and the Jewish church, that they might continue faithful to God in this season of trial, and for the king and empire, that the wicked acts of ungodly men might not draw down the vengeance of heaven.

But he gave *thanks* also. Was this a season of thankfulness? Yes. Not only would the remembrance of the goodness and mercy of God, which had followed him near ninety years, rush upon his mind, and inspire him with effusions of gratitude, neither to be restrained, nor fully expressed, but he would find the greatest reason to be thankful to God for the present occasion; thankful that he was counted worthy to suffer as a martyr for the cause of God; thankful that he had been so kept by divine grace, that no occasion could be found against him but in the matter of his God; thankful for the boldness which then animated him, and the support he was at that moment receiving from his God.

In the midst of the devout aspirations of this excellent man, while his soul was conversing with the Father of Spirits, behold his enemies break in upon him.

“ Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying, and making supplication before his God. Then they came near and spake before the king, concerning the king’s decree. Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him, and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him. Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth, may be changed.”

Alas, into what snares are men betrayed by their vanity and pride ! The king was reduced, by the operation of these principles, to sacrifice one of his most faithful and beloved subjects. First, there was the vanity which occasioned that foolish law of the Medes and Persians, that whatever the king had ordered, was not to be altered ; as

if every thing he did were necessarily so well and wisely done that there could arise no occasion to change it. Then there was the vanity of Darius, by which he allowed the particular law now spoken of to be so impiously made, in order to gratify his own pride; thus did his present weakness and inability to save an injured and excellent servant, arise from that very flattery which seemed to exalt his power to the highest pitch. How short-sighted is man! How liable is he to fall into the grossest errors, when he suffers himself to be influenced by his passions. Thus this high and mighty king, who had exalted himself above all men and gods, cannot even save the life of an innocent servant and faithful friend.

And now this great man, grown old in dignity and virtue, as well as in years, is led through the streets of Babylon! What crowds attend to behold this illustrious victim of envy and malice! Methinks I hear on one side the insulting shouts and cruel mockings of base and rude men, who hail a rising power by offering insult to that which is fallen. "Where now is his God! they cry, where now his boasted wisdom?"—On the other hand, I see a vast multitude of aged men, fathers of the Jewish church, with silent sorrow beholding him, and lifting up their hearts to heaven in his behalf. There are collected the young and the weaker sex, fixing their eyes, for the last time, upon the hope and the protector of their nation, and loudly bewailing his unmerited fate.—There, too, the crowd of those who have been deeply indebted to his bounty, wait to bid farewell to their benefactor, and to offer him the last tribute of

gratitude, in affectionate and sympathizing looks.

—There also the king waits to part with the man who was now raised higher than ever in his esteem.

—What was their conversation at this affecting interview we are not told: doubtless, it was worthy the piety and wisdom of Daniel. What sound advice would he give his royal master! What magnanimous consolation would he offer to him! What solemn lessons of instruction would he communicate, exhorting him to fear and serve the true God! What noble confidence would he express in the power of Jehovah to deliver him, if it so pleased him! What resignation to his will, if he chose to accept his death.—Even the heathen king was inspired also with confidence.

“Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God, whom thou serveest continually, he will deliver thee. And they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords, that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.”

Would we look for a scene where human greatness is most conspicuous, and human glory is advanced to the highest pitch, seek not for it amidst triumphant armies, or in splendid palaces. Behold *Daniel in the Den of Lions*. See the savage beasts, which just now roared with impatience to devour their prey, crouch with reverence, and lie down at his feet.—Behold this wonderful man, with the wild beasts around him, kneeling down, and with tears of gratitude and wonder, again offering

thanks to God ! What a scene ! What were his feelings ! I know not whether there was the visible appearance of the angel of God illuminating with glory the dark cavern, but I am sure he had the presence of God, and enjoyed the highest degree of communion with him. How would his mind be occupied with thoughts too mighty for utterance : with what wonder would he contemplate the power of the Most High, and with what praise behold it restraining the rage of the lions ! With what earnestness would he afresh devote to the service of God the life so miraculously preserved ! With what fervency would he again offer up thanksgiving and prayer for himself, and for the church of God ! What a night was this, ever to be remembered both by Daniel, and by all the servants of God !

Let us turn now to see what was passing in the city. By the enemies of Daniel, the night was probably kept in feasting and revelry ; they settled who should now fill the vacant seats in government ; they congratulated each other in the success of their scheme ; they planned measures of future prosperity ; they derided the foolish adherents of the fallen president for their superstition—others kept the night in fasting and prayer. It was a season of sorrow to all the Jews, and to all who feared God, or respected innocence and piety. Above all, it was a night of sorrow to the king.

“ Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting : neither were instruments of music brought before him, and his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the

morning, and went in haste to the Den of Lions. And when he came to the Den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake, and said unto Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the Den. So Daniel was taken up out of the Den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God. And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the Den of Lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the Lions had the mastery over them, and broke all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the Den."

One observation only shall be made upon this story. The part of it which most deserves our attention, is not the miracle which was wrought for Daniel, but the faithfulness which he exhibited in the hour of trial. The miracle, indeed, shews the notice God takes of the conduct of his servants, and the approbation with which he beholds their faithfulness; but it would have been the same thing, as to the glory of God, and the real honour of Daniel, had the Lions been suffered to devour him; for we are to judge of the

real honour of men, and the glory they bring to God, not by any events which may befall them, but by the dispositions which they exercise independent of the events. We have no right to expect a miracle to be wrought in our favour, but we may all be placed in circumstances in which we shall have an opportunity afforded us of manifesting the same kind of attachment to God and religion which Daniel did. Nay, there is no man living who is not frequently placed in such a situation, that he may shew very plainly whether he is influenced by a regard to God, and whether he will make any sacrifice to his God, and his religion.—May this story teach us, while we admire the excellence of Daniel's character, to imitate him both in that constancy of prayer by which he attained such excellence, and in that reverence for God, which will incline us in like manner to part with every thing for his sake when we are called to it.

A NEW  
CHRISTMAS TRACT;

OR THE

Right Way of Rejoicing at Christmas.

Shewing the Reasons we have for Joy at the Event of  
our SAVIOUR'S BIRTH.

**T**HERE are two ways of keeping Christmas : some seem to keep it much in the same way in which the unbelieving Jews kept their feast in honour of the calf which they had made. " And they made a calf in Horeb in those days, and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." But what a sad sort of Christianity is this ! I am no enemy to mirth of a proper kind, and at proper seasons ; but the mirth I now speak of is the mirth of inconsideration and of folly, and it is often mixed with much looseness of conduct and drunkenness. Is this, then, the sort of mirth proper for Christians ?

Let us suppose now, that a man was to choose a church as the place in which he was to sit and sing his jolly song, and to drink till he was intoxicated, surely this would imply that he was a person of extraordinary wickedness. But this you will say is what nobody is so bad as to be guilty of ; well then, let us suppose, that instead of choosing a

church as the place, he should choose Christmas as the time for the like acts of riot and drunkenness; methinks this must imply no small degree of the same kind of wickedness; for, as he that should get drunk in a church would insult the church, so he that gets drunk at Christmas, which is the season for commemorating the birth of Christ, insults Christ and his religion.

I know it may be said, that those who take these liberties at Christmas do not mean to insult Christ, and that they act from inconsideration; to which I answer, that they are then very guilty in being so inconsiderate; for I would just remark by the way, that these people, who are so very inconsiderate in some things, are apt to be very considerate in others; for instance, they are very considerate about their pleasures, but very inconsiderate about their duty; they are often, perhaps, very considerate about this world, always very inconsiderate about eternity; very considerate for themselves, and very little so about other people; extremely considerate on their own side of a bargain, but as inconsiderate about the side of the other party; and when they have committed a sin they are apt to be very considerate in finding out excuses for it, but very inconsiderate in tracing out the guilt and mischief of their wickedness. In short, then, let it be remembered, that inconsideration is often neither more nor less than another word for wickedness, and that the Inconsiderate way of spending Christmas, which has been spoken of, is only, in other words, the wicked way of spending it.

But now let us come to the true way of keeping

it. First, then, in order to know how the time of Christ's birth ought to be remembered by us, I would observe, that it is necessary to understand well who Christ was, and for what purpose he came on earth. How absurd would it be to celebrate the Fifth of November, without knowing that, on that day, the Houses of Parliament were saved from fire, and our happy Constitution, as well as our Religion, was preserved to us. Again: how absurd would it be for any man to celebrate the King's Birth-day, or Coronation Day, who did not feel within his heart loyalty and affection towards his sovereign, and who did not think that any blessings were derived from our kingly government.

Let every one, therefore, who wishes to spend Christmas aright, get acquainted with the benefits which have followed from Christ's coming into the world. We will endeavour, now, to shew, very shortly, what these benefits have been. The world, at the time of Christ's appearing, was divided into Jews and Gentiles. The word Gentiles signifies nations, that is, all the nations except the Jews. Let us speak of the Gentiles first, and of the Jews afterwards. The Gentiles were worshippers of false gods, some of one kind, some of another. They all, however, agreed in this, that they thought one god as good as another, and no one among them had any anxiety to bring his neighbour over to his religion, which is a plain proof that they had no true religion among them; for, whoever is possessed of true religion, is possessed of a great comfort and blessing, which he

will therefore be glad to convey to other people also. It was the custom of some of these Gentiles to worship stocks and stones; others bowed down to living animals, such as bulls or goats, or lizards; and others paid their stupid adoration to the sun, instead of the Author of it. Many of them worshipped their deceased fellow-creatures, and the dead men who were thus turned into gods had been, in general, some of the most wicked and abominable of the human race.

Now this ignorance of the true God was followed (as all ignorance of him is apt to be) by great wickedness in their practice. They were "given over on this account (as St. Paul, the inspired apostle declares) to a reprobate mind; to work all uncleanness with greediness." They learnt to confound good and evil—vices were then commonly practised, such as are not named among Christians. False principles, and false maxims of every kind, abounded. Slavery prevailed even in the most civilized lands, for almost all servants were slaves in those days. The earth was filled with violence. He that had killed the greatest number of his fellow-creatures got usually the greatest praise. Wars were carried on with dreadful ferocity, and multitudes were massacred at the public games, in battles fought for the amusement of the people. Humanity, kindness, and benevolence, were made no account of; and such a thing as an hospital was not known. Revenge was both practised and recommended; and those excellent Christian graces, humility, universal charity, and forgiveness of injuries, were

considered as weaknesses and faults. I shudder to think of the dreadful state of mankind in those days. God grant that the same evils may never return. They are the natural consequences of being without Christianity in the world; for, when Christianity is gone, there is no rule to go by. Every man may then set up a false goodness of his own. Morals, of course, grow worse and worse; a fierce and proud spirit comes in the place of Christian meekness and benevolence, and claims the name of virtue; and the Saviour of the world, with all his works of mercy, being forgot, man becomes cruel, and unjust, and selfish, and implacable, and unmerciful, for all the violent passions of our nature are let loose.

If we enquire also into the character of the Jews, who lived before the coming of our Saviour, we shall find them to have been deplorably corrupt, though they expected his coming, and were, in some measure, acquainted with true religion. The little knowledge which they had seems to have been perverted, through the wickedness of their hearts; and, in short, the Scriptures assure us, that "both Jews and Gentiles were all under sin." Such was the state into which the world was sunk before the time of our Saviour's appearance in it.

Let us describe, next, who Christ was, and what were the consequences of his coming. He is called in Scripture "the Son of God;" and in some places, "God's only Son;" which shews that there is no other being like unto him. We know that a son, by his very birth, derives pri-

vileges from his father which belong to no other person; that he partakes in the same rank and inheritance with his father; and that he possesses also, in an especial manner, his father's favour, and altogether differs from a stranger or a servant. Christ, then, is to be considered, in all such senses as these, as the Son of God. It is true, he is called also the Son of Man, for he was born of a woman, (namely, of the Virgin Mary,) and he took upon him our nature, dwelling on earth for thirty years. We should take great care, however, that his appearance among us, as a man, does not lead us to form any low and unworthy notions of him. Suppose now that the son of a king was to travel in the dress of a private subject, on some merciful and condescending errand, to a distant and obscure part of his territory, surely it would be very ungenerous and ungrateful, if the poor villagers, whom he came to serve, were to deny to him the honours of a king's son, merely because they could not believe that so great a person could stoop so low as to come among them, especially if he brought proofs of his power and greatness along with him. Just so, methinks, are all those persons ungenerous and ungrateful, who refuse to Christ that divine honour which belongs to him, merely because he condescended to be made flesh and blood, and to dwell among us. Let us, then, receive, with simplicity and humility, the scripture testimony concerning him. It speaks of him in terms that are quite astonishing. "His name," says the prophet, foretelling of his birth, "shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the

Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and the government shall be on his shoulders." The evangelist John tells us, that "the Word (meaning Christ) was with God, and the Word was God."—"By Him," it is said in the Hebrews, "God made the world;" and again, "let all the angels of God worship him. All power hath been given him, both in heaven and earth, and God hath committed all judgment to the Son."—"The hour also cometh: when they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation."

Such are a few of the expressions used in Scripture concerning Christ. Let us learn from these to adore his Divine Majesty, and trust his power, as well as to fear his wrath, and to account him able to fulfil all the purposes of his coming.

But let us next describe what these purposes were: it may be said in general, that "it was for us men, and for our salvation, that he came down from heaven; or, as the Scripture expresses it, "the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost, and to give his life a ransom for many."

The world, as hath already been shewn, was sunk in sin, and not in sin only, but in condemnation also. Ever since the fall of our first parent Adam, man had become a sinful creature. "But as in Adam all had died, so now in Christ were all (that is, all who would receive him) to be made

alive." Christ, then, was the second Adam: as Adam was the destroyer, so Christ was the restorer of our race. The devil, who is called the Prince of Darkness, had, as we are told in Scripture, become the god and the prince of this world. Christ, therefore, came into the world as a conqueror comes to recover an empire that was lost, and to bring back the rebels to their obedience, and to happiness. He came to overthrow that kingdom of darkness which, through the power of the devil, and the corruption of man, had been set up. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." He came "to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

But how does Christ fulfil his purpose of delivering us? First, I would observe, that he lived a most holy life, hereby setting before us an example that we should tread in his steps. He went about doing good; never was any one so kind and gracious to all who came to him, as Jesus Christ. I would here observe also, that he preached the gospel to mankind; he told us what we must believe and do, in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Through him also, the holy spirit of God is granted to us. And, to crown all, he died for us. He was nailed to the cross, and suffered a cruel death for our sakes, bearing the wrath of God in our stead. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins." Christ is that lamb of God "which has been offered up as a sacrifice,"

and "which taketh away the sins of the world." Now then, let us rejoice, and say triumphantly with the prophet of old, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a child is given."—"Behold, (said the angels) I bring you glad tidings of great joy: for unto you is born, this day, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."—"Glory be to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men."

Oh! how many thousands have had reason to bless the season which we are now commemorating—the season of the birth of Jesus Christ! The world, it is true, is still wicked, for there are many who do not believe in this Saviour; and there are not a few who think they believe in him, and who do not. Nevertheless, even the world in general has been the better for his coming, for the thick darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. Through Christ's coming, iniquity has been lessened, even among unbelievers; for the real Christians, though few, have held up to view the nature of true goodness, and even bad men have, in some measure, been constrained to imitate them; they have also grown more ashamed than they otherwise would have been of their vices.

But who can calculate the blessing which Christianity hath been to thousands of true believers? How many lives have been made holy here on earth; how many hearts have been cheered and comforted by it; how many deaths, which would otherwise have been most gloomy, have been rendered joyful and triumphant; and, above all, how many immortal souls have been

saved, and made happy to all eternity, through faith in this blessed Redeemer! "My sheep," says Christ, "hear my voice, and they follow me, and I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands."—"I go to prepare a place for them, that where I am they may be also."

And now, reader, what are your thoughts on the subject of our Saviour's appearance on this earth of ours? If you are a true Christian, your language will be such as the following: "It is through the coming of Christ into the world, that I have learnt to know myself, and to know the God who made me. I am by nature blind and ignorant; I am also sinful and undone; I am utterly without hope, except through the mercy of my Saviour; and even though I have been born in a Christian land, I can trace back, in my recollection, many proofs of this my natural ignorance, and corruption, and hardness of heart. I was once like a sheep going astray, but I am now returned to the shepherd of my soul. I followed the bent of my own foolish will, but the grace of God in Jesus Christ hath changed my sinful heart; the knowledge of my corruption has humbled me; the thought of my Saviour's dying for me has stirred up divine gratitude within me, and that acquaintance with his gospel which I have gained, hath changed my whole views of life. Christ's character delights me; I read the history of his humble birth, his painful death, and his glorious resurrection, as it is recorded in Scripture, with hope and joy, and with holy con-

fidence and trust. How shall I sufficiently bless God for Jesus Christ! Whatever change has been wrought in me, I trace to Christ's coming into the world. If Christ had never come, how corrupt should I at this moment have been, how blind, how dark, how ignorant, how different from what, through the grace of God, I now am! How miserable, in comparison of my present happiness! I am engaged, indeed, in a sharp conflict with my sins; but, through my Saviour's help, I hope to gain ground against them. I have, occasionally, doubts and fears, but, in general, I feel confident that the promises of God are sure and certain in Christ Jesus; for I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that soul which I have committed to him till the great day."

### A CHRISTMAS HYMN.

JOY to the world, the Lord is come,

Let earth receive her king;  
Let every heart prepare him room,  
And heav'n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth the Saviour reigns,

Let men their songs employ,  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains,  
Repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,

Nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make his blessings flow,  
Far as the curse is found.

Our father ate forbidden fruit,  
And from his glory fell,  
And we, his children, thus were brought  
To death, and near to hell.

Blest be the Lord who sent his Son  
To take our flesh and blood,  
He for our lives gave up his own,  
To make our peace with God.

He honour'd all his Father's laws,  
Which we have disobey'd;  
He bore our sins upon the cross,  
And our full ransom paid.

Behold him rising from the grave;  
Behold him rais'd on high:  
He pleads his merit there, to save  
Transgressors doom'd to die.

Soon shall the Lord to judgment come,  
And with a sovereign voice  
Shall call, and break up every tomb,  
And bid his saints rejoice.

O may I then with joy appear  
Before the Judge's face,  
And with the blest'd assembly there  
Sing his redeeming grace.

THE  
TOUCHSTONE;  
OR, THE  
WAY TO KNOW A TRUE CHRISTIAN.

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IN this Christian country, or at least among the more Christian part of it, the duty of imitating him by whose name we call ourselves, is a point which must be allowed to be clear. I think it must also be admitted, by all who consider themselves as Christians, that in proportion as a man differs from his Saviour, and turns away from the consideration of his character and conduct, in the same proportion does he depart from true goodness, and betray the unsoundness of his whole Christian profession.

We shall proceed, without further preface, to speak of a few of those tempers and dispositions which most remarkably distinguished our blessed Lord, and they shall be the following:

First. He was remarkable for his *condescension and humility*, and for his indifference to worldly praise. He sought not honour from men; he never aimed at earthly distinction or superiority, but submitted willingly to be considered as one of the meanest of the people. No

lofty, high-minded thoughts; no aspiring desires were harboured in his breast. He made himself "of no reputation," and appeared as the servant of all. It was most wonderful condescension in Christ, who is spoken of in Scripture, as "coming down from heaven," and as having partaken in "the glory of the Father, before the world was," even to visit this world at all. It was still greater condescension to visit us in the character of a man like ourselves, but the condescension is increased to a still more astonishing pitch, by his appearing among us, even as the poorest and most despised of mankind. He was destitute of such common conveniences as even the lowest have. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." We find him condescending to wash his disciples feet, and also warning them not to consider themselves as true believers in him, if they "sought honour one of another:" at another time we find him admonishing them to be "poor in spirit," and at another "not to choose the highest place," but willingly and contentedly to take the lowest, till they should be called up higher, assuring them, that it was a maxim in his kingdom, "that every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Secondly. Our Saviour was also endued with the greatest *meekness and patience*. No hastiness of spirit, no rash anger or resentment was found in him. His soul was meek and gentle as a lamb; all the trials, affronts, and injuries which

he met with, were submitted to by him patiently, without the least murmuring or repining. "He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." "He hid not his face from shame and spitting."—"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." St. Peter tells us, that "when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously;" and his own admonition to his followers is, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls." When his enemies treated him with the greatest unkindness and cruelty, he returned them good for evil, and sought to promote their happiness and salvation. So far was his mind from harbouring any malice or revenge, that he prayed even for his murderers, and recommended them to the divine mercy, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Thirdly. The mind of Christ was also filled with the tenderest *compassion and love*. This was manifested throughout his whole conduct, by the kind attention which he shewed, both to the bodies and souls of men. He "went about doing good," relieving the helpless, healing the diseased, and comforting the afflicted. He also instructed the ignorant, and "gave light to them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death."

The poor guilty sinner found him a friend indeed. We never read of any sinner turning from his sins, and calling upon Christ, without receiving an answer of peace, so that our Saviour shewed by his conduct, that he came, as he himself expresses it, "to seek and to save that which was lost." He is represented in Scripture, as one who was always labouring to promote the salvation of those around him; and when men would not hearken to his words, but determined still to go on in their sins, his soul pitied them, and he was "grieved for their hardness of heart." How fully does his pathetic lamentation over devoted Jerusalem speak the compassionate affection of his mind! "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, and ye would not."

But his love was shewn most eminently in his laying down his life for us: as he speaks, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." This great instance of love he shewed, yet this was not all: He laid down his life for his *enemies*. St. Paul says, "When we were yet without strength," or when we had fallen so as to be utterly helpless and ruined "in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man would one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Herein is love beyond example. We read of some who have been induced to die for their country or their friends, but where have we heard or read of any one, except Jesus Christ, who has willingly died for his enemies; for those who offended and cruelly injured him.

Fourthly. Christ was remarkable for the most perfect *obedience and resignation to the will of God.*

"I came down from heaven," he saith, "not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And I must work the work of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work." At twelve years old we find him diligently employed in pursuing the great object for which God sent him into the world, reasoning with, and questioning the Jewish doctors in the temple. When his mother inquired of him, concerning the reason of his conduct, his answer was, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" He was more intent on obeying God, than on receiving his daily food. "I have meat to eat," said he, "which the world knows not of:" and immediately after, he adds, "my meat is to do the will of God, and to finish the work which he hath given me to do." And as he was active in performing, so was he also patient in suffering whatever God required. All the severe trials and afflictions which Christ endured, were endured without reluctance or repining, because he knew that they came upon him by divine appointment. Even when his last bitter sufferings drew near, and his human nature shuddered at

the prospect of them, hear with what obedient resignation he prayed: "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.—Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done."

If there were room to enlarge on this subject, we might proceed to speak of our Saviour's spotless purity; of his unshaken faith and trust in God; of his noble courage in the cause of truth; and also of his ardent devotion, as well as many other shining excellencies in his character; but it is the less necessary, because they are partly implied in the tempers already treated of.

And now let me put a very simple question to the reader:—Who are they that are the true disciples of this Jesus Christ? The answer is easy:—The true disciples are those, undoubtedly, who most nearly resemble that character of Christ which has been spoken of. Those are not the true Christians who merely call themselves such. Again, those are not the true Christians who, though they believe and affirm the Bible to be true, yet never read it, and know nothing of what is contained in it. Again, those are not the true Christians who, though they may read the Bible, and though they can prove by argument, that it is no imposture, are, nevertheless, no better for all this knowledge. Again, they are not the true Christians who have had Christian baptism, who attend at Christian worship, and receive every month the Christian sacrament, and who are orthodox even in their creed, and

can see the errors into which other men fall on these subjects; for a man may still want the main thing which Christianity—consists in, I mean he may want a resemblance to Christ in his turn of character, and temper, and spirit. But in order to bring this whole subject more distinctly home to the reader, let us again briefly touch on the several tempers that were spoken of.

First, then, your Saviour was remarkable for his condescension, humility, and indifference to worldly praise. Are you distinguished by the same dispositions? Are you willing to drop down from your rank in life, as Christ did from his celestial dignity? Are you contented also with a low estate as he was? And is your heart deadened like his to the desire of worldly praise and reputation? Is this, I say, your character? or, on the contrary, are you one of those Christians who make a point of not stooping to any employment that is judged beneath them, and who are continually aiming at high acquaintance, whose great anxiety it is also to fare plentifully in this world, and who, in short, are in full chace of wealth as well as reputation, honour, and preferment? This is one test by which you are to judge whether you are a Christian.

Secondly. We spoke of the meekness and patience of Christ. When he was “reviled, he reviled not again.” His soul, as we observed, was meek and gentle as a lamb. Is this also your character? Has your natural temper, if it is hasty, been brought under, so that affronts and injuries do not much ruffle you? Are you not made violent in your spirit by the violence

of those who are opposed to you? How do you feel, for instance, towards men of an opposite nation, or of a contrary party to you in politics, or of another sect in religion? Christ died for his enemies; how do you feel towards all your enemies? Do you bear the evils of life also, as Christ did, without murmuring and complaining, submitting cheerfully to hard and humble lot, if it be the will of your heavenly Father?

Thirdly. Christ was full of tender compassion and love, both to the bodies and souls of men. How stands the likeness in these particulars? For instance, what part of your time and money do you give to the relief of men's bodily distresses? Is your character that of a father to the fatherless, a visitor of the sick, a benefactor to the poor, and a comforter of the afflicted? Do you, like your Saviour, "go about doing good?" How do you act also towards those who are of bad character in the world, and who have trespassed, as some judge, past all forgiveness? Does your benevolence embrace even these outcasts also? It was one of the reproaches cast on Christ by the Pharisees, that he stooped too low in this respect, and that he seemed to take the part of wicked and undeserving people. "Behold!" said they, "a friend to publicans and sinners;" and again, "this woman is a sinner." Are you, in like manner, a friend to the most discreditable kind of sinners? Is the idea of their unworthiness no argument with you for declining an opportunity of doing them good? Do you take their part, and not despair of them, notwithstanding the sneers of some unchristian people? Or, on

the contrary, does the dread of suffering, in your own reputation, continually check you in the just exercise of your beneficence?

But the love of Christ had respect chiefly to the souls of men. Are you chiefly concerned about their souls also? Do you do what in you lieth to promote men's eternal interests? Do you labour to enlighten, to instruct, to invite, and to warn men with all earnestness, as Christ did? And do you weep over the case of impenitent sinners, as your Saviour wept over Jerusalem? Or, on the contrary, are you one of those who make light of men's spiritual interests, who seem almost to forget that their fellow-creatures have immortal souls, and who, at the utmost, can only be prevailed on to shew a little humanity to their bodies?

Fourthly. Christ was remarkable for his obedience and resignation to the will of God. He evidently lived only for the purpose of doing the will of his heavenly Father. Is this the proposed end of your living? Do you consider all your employments in this life as the fulfilling of a work which God hath given you to do, and do you labour to know his will in order to your thus fulfilling it? Or, on the contrary, are you one of those who never think of God's will, but go their own way, and say, they have a right to please themselves, provided they commit no great crime against their neighbour? And again, when crosses or troubles come upon you, do you bear them with resignation, considering them to be sent by God; or are you

impatient until they are removed, reversing, on such occasions, the language of your Saviour, and saying, "Not thy will, O Lord! but mine be done?"

On the subject of our Saviour's holiness and purity, his unshaken faith and trust in God, his boldness in the cause of truth, and his ardent devotion, as well as his other excellencies, we will not attempt to enter here. Let it be remembered, however, that it is the part of a true christian to trace out the whole character of his Saviour, and to imitate him in every one of those points in which the Scriptures set him forth as our example.

And now let us make an appeal, in a few words, to two or three different descriptions of people. And first to the downright infidel. You are one who disbelieves in Christ; but are you one that has duly weighed and considered his character? What is the fault you find in it? When the unbelieving Jews once took up stones to cast at Jesus, he answered them, by saying, "Many good works have I shewed you from my Father, and for which of these works do you stone me?" And so it may be said to you now. Many excellencies in Christ's character have been set before you, and for which of these is it that you disbelieve in him? Surely you cannot deny that there is something very excellent and unimpeachable, something very pure and holy, something also very original, something, in short, that looks very like divine in the character that has been spoken of, nor can there be any doubt of the tendency of the dispositions

which have been described to promote the peace and happiness of mankind. When, therefore, one man scoffs, when another gravely disbelieves, when a third doubts about Christianity; when difficulties rise up in the minds of some, and when profane and blaspheming books are spread abroad to overthrow the faith of others, to all this host of unbelievers we beg leave, in this place, simply to reply, by opposing to them the character of Jesus Christ, a character, which those who are the most violent in running down christianity, will be found, I believe, in general, to take very little trouble in considering.

When those unbelieving Jews of old, who were so bent on crucifying Christ, were asked, "Why, what evil hath he done?" The grand difficulty was, to get them to give their attention fairly to the character of the prisoner; the multitude of them, when this very reasonable question was asked, are said to have returned to their general abuse, and to have "only cried out the more, Let him be crucified;" but when Pilate, though disposed to side with the Jews, was obliged, by his office, to examine and cross examine this Jesus, "Verily," said Pilate, "I find no fault in him."—Our present difficulty is much the same; for if we could but persuade our modern infidels and blasphemers to bestow for once a little time in examining, point by point, the character of this Jesus of Nazareth, as Pilate did, methinks they would be glad to wash their hands also, like Pilate, of the blame of being his more forward enemies: they would turn over at least

the heavier part of the guilt to the rabble of more uninformed persons, saying, like Pilate, after the examination, "Take ye him, and crucify him."

But let us next address the merely nominal and false Christians. Now these are the persons who, though some of them lament, perhaps, the present growth of infidelity, have been the principal causes of it. Not a few of these Christians, so called, are, it is to be feared, men even of immoral character, and these must be named among the best friends of infidelity, for the corrupt life of one who calls himself a Christian is certainly the greatest of all encouragements to the unbelievers. But let us not confine our observation to immoral Christians only. You are certainly a promoter of infidelity, if you do but fail of having that peculiar temper and turn of mind which has been described. I will suppose now that you are a decent moral person—but must we not own that so also are many of the infidels?—honourable—so are the infidels;—humane, perhaps handsome, in your conduct, and very respectable—but so also are many of the infidels. If this then be all, you have nothing in your character but what is common both to you and them, and an infidel, at this rate, is just as good as a Christian; and if as good, he must be as safe also—surely, then, there is no need of Christianity; and if there is no need of it, there arises a strong suspicion also that there is no truth in it; for to suppose christianity to be true, and sent of God, as it professes to be, while, nevertheless, there is no need of it, and while the fol-

lowers of it are no better than the unbelievers, is to suppose that God acts foolishly and in vain, which supposition is itself a kind of infidelity, and is an approach even to atheism. It follows, therefore, that in order to defend the truth of christianity, it is necessary to exclude out of the pale of the true Christian\* church every such merely decent Christian as I have been speaking of, saying to him, (as all serious Christians indeed are used to do) that you have no share in the privileges of the gospel any more than the unbelievers; and if "he that believeth not shall be condemned," then you, it is to be feared, are involved in the same condemnation.

We cannot help observing, that Christians of this merely decent class, especially if possessed of a little orthodoxy also, are not seldom the persons who cry out most violently against infidelity, and who, perhaps, come forward in defence of the national faith; as if these were the best champions by whom the truths of Christ can be defended; whereas I think I have shewn, that they are some of the very persons who have betrayed the cause, and have surrendered up the ark of our most holy faith into the hands of the modern Philistines.

Let us next address another class of persons, I mean those who are very remarkable for their attachment to certain Christian doctrines, and are very zealous for what they call the Gospel. Some of these, perhaps, carry their zeal for doctrines so far, that they feel but little interest in any thing that can be said concerning the ex-

ample of Christ, and are ready to turn away from what they call so merely moral a lesson. They desire to hear of nothing else than the "blood and righteousness of Christ," and his atonement, and grace, and intercession. But has not the same Scripture, which speaks on these subjects, said also, "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," and that Christ hath set us an example that we should tread in his steps; and again, "that he that saith he abideth in him, ought himself so to walk as he walked:" and again, "that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, (which certainly must include the temper of Christ) he is none of his." A plain scriptural declaration of the character of Christ, and an appeal to those texts which assert the necessity of being like him in our own character and conduct, may be of admirable use in pulling down the vain confidence of the enthusiast, in rectifying many errors of the bigot, in exposing the sinful passions of some who pretend that they are magnifying Christ, in proving, in short, the faith of all, and in calming many political as well as religious controversies of the Christian church.

But once more. There are some who think, indeed, that they copy after Christ, and that they copy him the more, because they make light of doctrines, and bestow their whole attention upon practice. But what is their practice? Are they close and real imitators of all these holy tempers of Jesus? I fear those who neglect, or pervert the doctrinal parts of Scripture, in order to suit their own creed, are prone equally to forget, or

lower, what is practical in Scripture, in order to fuit their own practice : many take, for instance, only a part of Christ's example, instead of the whole of it, and even what they take they lower, and deprive of all the spirit that is in it before they can agree to it : thus they may, possibly, imitate Christ's benevolence to the bodies of men, but even this is done only in some small degree, for they cannot be said to "go about doing good," as Christ did, making their benevolence their business, and quitting their home, like him, in search of wretched people ; and as to Christ's benevolence to the souls of men, they hardly think of it, and are altogether opposite to him in that particular : thus many also may consider a certain degree of resignation to Providence, in a time of calamity, to be a branch of Christian duty, and may fancy they follow Christ's example in this respect, while, in fact, perhaps they are much more influenced by an idea of its being necessary to submit to their fate : and as to that other temper of Christ, which we coupled with willingness to suffer, I mean a willingness also to do the whole will of our heavenly Father, here they most lamentably fail : for do they look upon the doing of God's will, as Christ did, to be more necessary, as it were, than their daily meat, and do they count their time, their money, and their labour lost, except as it is devoted to God's service, and employed for his glory ? In truth, the whole example of Christ, when rightly understood, can neither be imitated nor approved by the common kind of worldly men ; and,

indeed, we all seem naturally to fall into dispositions the most contrary to those which characterized our Saviour ; for are men naturally humble, and lowly, and indifferent, as he was to worldly praise ? Are they naturally prone to forgive injuries, and to love even their enemies, shewing their chief compassion also to the souls of those whom they love ? Are men naturally disposed to renounce their own will, and to look only to the will of God ? and are men naturally submissive, and resigned, and devoted altogether to the Lord's service ? The corruption of our nature, then, is one of the lessons which we learn by thus appealing to the example of Christ as the Touchstone of real goodness ; and when, through the knowledge of this corruption, we are humbled under the sense of guilt, and are become anxious to find mercy, then, and not till then, we turn to our Saviour's cross, and begin heartily to plead " the propitiation " of that Son of God, who " bare our sins in his own body on the tree," having " given his life to be a ransom for us."

The distance at which we find ourselves from the great standard of perfection, and the difficulty which we soon begin to feel when we endeavour to copy after it, cannot fail to teach us another lesson in christianity of the first importance ; we are now taught, I mean, to " bow our knees " before the God of all grace, imploring him " to help our infirmities," and to pour down upon us a portion of that spirit which was " given without measure " unto Christ ; and thus do the several parts of christianity reflect mutual light on

each other. He then is the true Christian who, believing the doctrines of Christ, is also animated thereby to follow all the precepts of his master; who heartily approves, and zealously copies, after the bright example that is set before him; and who, by the help of divine grace, attains, in his humble measure, to some true resemblance of his Saviour.

ON THE  
SACRAMENT  
OF THE  
LORD'S SUPPER.

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**H**OW comes it that so many persons who go regularly to public worship, nevertheless do not attend at the Sacrament? Are they right or wrong in turning their backs on this solemn ordinance? It is a question well worth considering, and it is the intention of this tract to clear up, in some measure, this important subject.

I believe the principal reason which many people have to give for not receiving the Sacrament is, that they are afraid of it. "I think it an awful thing," say they, "to receive the Sacrament. I am fearful lest I should eat and drink my own damnation." To such persons we reply, have you ever enquired into the real meaning and nature of what you so much dread? Read the present tract. Learn to understand what the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is; and when you know, then decide whether you will receive it or not. Let me here remark also, that the phrase of "eating and drinking our own damnation," is a phrase extremely misunderstood. It is borrowed from the apostle Paul, but when the

apostle used it, he applied it to certain Corinthians who got drunk at the Sacrament; and it is material also to observe, that by the word "damnation," the apostle meant "condemnation;" and you will find, if you will read the passage, that he alluded chiefly to certain judgments\* in this world, which the Corinthians brought upon them, so that even in their case he did not mean to declare, that there would be no room for repentance in this world, and no salvation in the next. It must be owned, in like manner, or rather, it ought to be solemnly insisted on, that every one who now communicates unworthily, increases his guilt rather than promotes his salvation; but still he does not sin past all possibility of forgiveness; and let it be remembered, that a man may sin not only by communicating unworthily, but also by refusing to communicate.

*On the Manner in which CHRIST appointed the  
Sacrament of the LORD'S SUPPER.*

The best means of knowing what is the true nature of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is, to enquire into all that passed when our Saviour appointed it. We read with little difference of terms, in several of the Evangelists, that our Saviour, "on the same night in which he was

\* For this cause (namely, because ye eat and drink to your own damnation, or condemnation) many are weak and sickly among you.

betrayed, being at supper with his disciples, took bread and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me. Likewise also, the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for you." The apostle Paul further observes, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." From this short and simple account, which is nearly all that Scripture says on the subject, we are to collect what was our Saviour's intention in appointing this Sacrament.

Now, I think, we are to understand, that he thereby meant to command all Christians to meet together, from time to time, and to partake of bread and wine, in order to keep up among them the remembrance of this his last supper with his disciples, and of the sufferings and death of Christ, which immediately followed. "Take, eat," said he, after having broken the bread, "this is my body." That is, this broken bread is to remind you of my body, broken for your sake. And, speaking of the cup, he said, "Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." That is, this cup is to remind you of my blood being shed for the pardon (or remission) of sins. "Do this in remembrance of me." These last mentioned words may be understood both as an entreaty and as a command. Christ your Saviour entreats you thus to remember him. Christ also, who is your Judge and Lord, commands you to

do it. The command is as plain as any other command of Scripture; and he who disobey one command of Christ, may, with much the same reason, disobey every other. It is, in short, as if our blessed Saviour had said, "I am now about to die for your sins, and to rise again for your justification; and I make it my last and dying request, that you, and all my disciples, will accustom yourselves to meet together, and to partake of bread and wine, as we have now done, in token of your bearing in mind my painful and bloody death, and in token also of your believing that I, who am now about to be crucified, shall hereafter come again, according to my promise, in power and great glory." "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

*What it is to receive the Sacrament unworthily.*

First, then, I think it is plain, that to receive it ignorantly, is to receive it unworthily. This may very properly be called, "not discerning the Lord's body." Gross ignorance, or error, concerning the nature of the Sacrament, evidently shews a man to be unfit, at present, to receive it; and gross ignorance of the doctrines of christianity is, in like manner, a disqualification. This ignorance, however, is that which should immediately be cured. Every person who is come to years of discretion should be afraid of remaining a stranger to the Lord's table. He should lose no time in enquiring into the nature of it, and when he understands it, he is no more to be excused for absenting himself from it, than he is for ab-

senting himself from the common public worship.

But next I would observe, that to receive the Sacrament in any respect lightly and carelessly, is to receive it unworthily. Some receive the Sacrament as a thing of course, as soon as ever they arrive at a certain age; and at this same age, perhaps, they go and plunge themselves into all the vanities and follies of the world, if not into its vices also. Some receive it because they have a grave character to support; some because they are expected to receive it, and are ashamed to refuse to do so, having, for instance, a brother or a sister who receives it, from whom they do not care to differ; some from mere zeal for their own church, of which they shew themselves steady members by receiving the Sacrament according to the forms which it has appointed; some from a confused mixture of several of the abovementioned motives; and some for the mere purpose of qualifying themselves for a place under government. Thus, while many seriously disposed persons need to be encouraged to come to the Lord's table much more than is their custom, it is to be feared also, that there are not a few of our communicants who in one way or other receive the Sacrament very unworthily.

Again; to receive the Lord's Supper superstitiously, is to receive it, in some measure, unworthily. Now a man receives it superstitiously who thinks there is some charm or unaccountable virtue in it, and who is not content with believing the Sacrament to be a means of grace, in the same manner as prayer, or the reading of

the Scriptures, or attendance on public worship. The papists go so far as to adore the elements of bread and wine, which they also fancy that the priest is able, by consecration, to turn into the real and literal body and blood of Christ: and there are some protestants who have not entirely escaped from the same error; for they fancy that there is some dark and mystical meaning in the Sacrament, which, however, they cannot explain; and they are not aware that it is that plain and simple thing which we have described it to be. I am sorry to add, that some superstitious protestants imitate the papists in another respect. They think that they have done a very meritorious deed when they have received the Sacrament; they have gone through what they call their religious duty, and in consideration of this they fancy that they have now obtained a right to employ themselves in any manner they think fit, and away therefore they go from the Lord's table into the world with minds full of ambition, or pride, or covetousness; and the very Sacrament which they have attended, serves to confirm them in the neglect of daily and habitual repentance, and to give a dangerous and false peace to their consciences. There are persons of this description who prepare themselves, possibly with much solemnity, for the day of receiving the Sacrament, and who even attend the service with a face of great sanctity and seriousness. It must, nevertheless, be laid down as a maxim, that whenever any one's life is quite at variance with every thing he professes at the Lord's table, that person must be considered as

a mere hypocrite and self-deceiver, and as one of the worst and most unworthy sort of communicants.

*On the Self-examination that is proper before we determine to receive the Sacrament.*

St. Paul, after reproving the Corinthians for their profanation of the Lord's Supper, observes, "but let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." In the catechism of the church of England, we are instructed what it is that may now be particularly required of communicants; namely, "that they should examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new life; whether they have a lively faith in God's mercy, through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death, and whether they are in charity with all men." Let every one then examine himself on these several heads, and more especially when he is, for the first time, about to communicate. Here, however, while we warn the careless not to be too slight in their self-examination, let us also caution the serious not to be too severe. It is not required that a man should have become free from sin, nor that he should even have reached to some great heights in religion, before he ventures to the Sacrament; for the Sacrament itself supposes us sinful creatures, and is intended to cheer us with the hope of pardon, through that death of Christ, which it sets before us. Reader! if your heart is full of pride or covetousness, or impenitence, and unbelief; or if you are carried

away by the love of the world, and are cold and indifferent about religion ; or if you are habitually given to any deceit or fraud, or to any secret wickedness, approach not to the holy table ; but if the sins I have spoken of are the very things which you hate, and if the mercies of God in Christ are the sincere desire of your soul, then doubt not that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is intended for such persons as you, however weak your faith, and however small your present attainments.

*On the Dispositions which we should feel at the Time of Communicating.*

The Lord's Supper was ordained " for a continual remembrance of the sacrifice and death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby." The benefits which we receive from the death of Christ, are therefore one of the chief subjects on which we should reflect when we are approaching the table of the Lord. We should consider that we are now about to commemorate the death of that Saviour who died for us, " the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God : " " who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." " All we like sheep have gone astray ; but the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Let it never be forgotten, when we go to the table of the Lord, that we should go thither in the very character of sinners. " In this respect there is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory

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of God," "being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." Christ is that "Lamb of God," a Lamb "without blemish, and without spot," which has been offered up as a bleeding sacrifice, and "which taketh away the sins of the world." "Take, eat, this is my body, which is given for you," and "this is my blood which is shed for you for the remission of sins." Unto him, therefore, we are to look, and through the exercise of this faith in Christ, and not "through our own works or deservings," we are to hope for pardon. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Such are some of the thoughts concerning our Saviour's death, as well as the blessed effects of it, which the Scriptures teach us to indulge, and which are more peculiarly proper at the time of receiving the Sacrament.

*On the Character and Conduct which becomes us after having received the Sacrament.*

Presuming the reader to be a member of the church of England, we will here more particularly remind him of a few passages in the sacramental service provided by our church. In that service we are supposed to say, "We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful

Lord ! trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies." Now have we been sincere in uttering these words ? Let us beware then how we afterwards talk of the innocence of our lives and the goodness of our hearts, and how we boast of our character and our honour as worldly people do ; let us take care that we never put any part of our confidence in that righteousness which we have professed in those words to renounce. Humility, meekness, patience towards others, loving-kindness and charity, a disposition to forgive injuries, and to take reproofs without anger, contentment with our lot, and submission under the afflicting hand of Providence, all these are tempers which cannot fail to arise out of an habitual sense of our unworthiness, and they are the tempers therefore which become a communicant ; nor is there any doubt that every sincere communicant will find these tempers increase in him through his frequent attendance at the Lord's table.

Again ; we are supposed, by another part of the service, most humbly to declare, " We do most earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings. The remembrance of them is grievous unto us ; the burthen of them is intolerable." But how false and hypocritical should we suspect ourselves to have been in these words, if we seldom afterwards feel any sorrow for our sins, if we neglect the duty of habitual repentance, and if we pretend that Christ will save us, or that the mere Sacrament will save us, without our feeling in our hearts any great hatred of

iniquity. Let us therefore never think, after we have pronounced those words, that sin can be counted too great an evil, that temptations to sin can be too much avoided, that repentance can ever be too deep or serious, or that things in this respect can, as the world imagine, be ever carried too far.

Once more.—We are supposed, at the end of the service, each of us to declare, “and here we offer and present unto thee ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee.” Do we then indeed, and in truth, thus devote ourselves to God? To have said these words, and to have repeated them again and again at the Sacrament, is to have done little. By these words it is meant, not only that a solemn service should be performed, and that a momentary feeling should be expressed; but it is intended also to imply, that we purpose actually to employ all our powers and faculties, whether of body or of soul, our time, our wealth, our abilities, and our influence, in the cause of our Maker and our Redeemer: for “we are not our own, but are bought with a price;” a life really laid out in the service of God is therefore to be expected in a communicant. To redeem each precious moment of our time, by employing it in whatever is our most proper and most urgent work, to shake off our natural indolence and sloth, and to go from the Lord's table into scenes of diligence and usefulness: thus to join together the love of God and of man, and to be active as well as to be devout, is to be consistent in our character as Christians.

If, then, we have attended at the table of the Lord, "let us not forget to do good, and to distribute ; for these also " are sacrifices with which God is well pleased." Let us not only pour out our hearts in prayer, but let us also employ our active powers in the Lord's service. " Let us be steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Let us " keep under our body, and bring it into subjection." Let us command our passions, and restrain our tongues. Let us also be punctual in our engagements, upright, exemplary. Let us be " zealously affected in every good cause ;" and while we " visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," let us take equal care that " we keep ourselves unspotted from the world."

EXPLANATION  
OF THE  
NATURE OF BAPTISM.



THE sacrament of Baptism, like that of the Lord's supper, was appointed by Jesus Christ himself, and, no doubt, for the wisest purposes. It is a means whereby we may acquire no small insight into the nature of the whole Christian religion. Unhappily, however, there is a remarkable degree of carelessness and ignorance about this subject prevailing among us, insomuch, that if some pains are not taken to represent this important matter aright to our countrymen in ge-

neral, and to all parents in particular, we seem in danger of losing all the benefit which was intended to be conveyed to us by this institution of Christ. It is true, the form of Baptism is still continued among us. Parents appear, almost with one consent, to bring their children to be baptized; but for what purpose do they bring them? Is it because they really wish to pledge their children, and to pledge themselves afresh, to fight under the banners of Christ? Oh, no; for there are many who hardly once think of Christ in the matter. I appeal to the common observation of my readers, whether the day of baptizing a child is not, by many parents, made to be little else than a day of extraordinary feasting, a day of vanity and ostentation, a day at least of mere worldly joy, on which, when the clergyman has done his office, not a word is to be heard of that "kingdom of heaven" whereof the child is now said to be a "partaker," nor of those holy ends for the sake of which Baptism was appointed by Jesus Christ.

Godfathers and godmothers also have learnt, as well as parents, to be very inconsiderate about this sacred ordinance. They promise, indeed, in the face of God and of the church, "to renounce," in the child's name, "this wicked world, with all the sinful lusts of the flesh," and they also are understood expressly to undertake that the child shall be taught not only "the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments," but also "all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe for his soul's health;" and yet the most of them have no sooner made this vow

than they think they have done with it; they reflect not whether the parent be a person who is likely to pay that attention to the child's soul, for which they have been engaging, nor do they ever afterwards bestow a single thought on it's religious education themselves.

Some there are, indeed, who do not act quite so absurdly about Baptism, nor think quite so lightly of it as many others, and yet are far from turning it to a truly religious use: they are aware, in part, of the profanation of it which is so common; but they have not the courage to differ from the general custom. They dare not refuse, for instance, to stand godfather or godmother whensoever some one expects or requests it of them. To do so is a bad custom, they allow, but since it is a custom they must comply with it. Ah, how little do they reflect, that in that very vow, which, in the child's name, they are about to take, there is contained a promise "to renounce the world;" in which promise the renunciation of its sinful customs is, no doubt, included; and I therefore ask such persons, whether the custom of undertaking lightly the duty of godfathers and godmothers is not one of those sinful customs which the very ceremony of Baptism pledges them to renounce?

In short, then, it must be acknowledged, that Baptism is on all sides neglected and profaned, and that it is become now little else than a convenient ceremony, by which people bestow a name upon their children.

But is this all that was intended by it? It surely needs no argument to prove, that it was never

meant by the Founder of it to serve merely as a national ceremony by which we were to register ages, or to give names to our children. It cannot be, that a Sacrament ordained by him who died for us, enjoined upon his disciples nearly in his last words, and emphatically urged upon us in those remarkable expressions, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved:"—I say, it cannot be that a Sacrament thus solemnly appointed can deserve to be lightly treated. Depend upon it, it cannot be made light of without affronting Him who is the Founder of it. It cannot be made light of without making light of Christ; without making light of Him, who is the hope of fallen man, and the only Saviour of our souls.

Let us then proceed reverently to inquire what is the true meaning and nature of it.

And here I would first remark, that long before Baptism was appointed there prevailed among the Jews the ceremony of circumcision, which had nearly the same use and design. Abraham was the first person on whom circumcision was enjoined. Abraham was called by the Divine goodness from a state of ignorance and idolatry; he was blessed also with many great and glorious promises; he was made the father of the faithful, and was himself adopted into the family of God; in token whereof circumcision was required of him as a sign, the same thing being required also of his children the Jews, who became the peculiar people of God: not that the mere sign or ceremony could bring any one into God's favour,

for the apostle tells the Jews, that if they did not also "keep the law, verily their circumcision was made uncircumcision." And again it is said, "for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." The being "a new creature" was therefore the great point: and circumcision seems to have been intended to represent to men in those early ages, that new and holy state into which they must be brought in order to their being introduced into the favour of God, uncircumcision representing, on the other hand; that sinful condition in which we are born, and in which we all naturally are, according to that expression of the apostle, "And you who were *dead in your sins*, and in the *uncircumcision* of your flesh, yet now hath he reconciled."

Having thus made it appear what circumcision meant of old, let us next shew from the same word of God what Baptism signifies now.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night in order to inquire (as it seems) into the nature of that new religion of which he had heard, Jesus says to him, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus not understanding what was spoken, our Saviour declares again, "Except a man be born of *water* and of the *Spirit* he cannot see the kingdom of God." What is it to be born of water and of the Spirit? The answer, I think, will be found easy, especially if we take advantage of the information given us in other parts of Scripture. Water, we there find, is the sign ordered to be used in

Baptism, on account of its cleansing whatever is dirty or defiled: the Holy Spirit, however, is the thing signified by the water; for as it is the business of water to cleanse the defilement of the body, so it is the office of the Holy Spirit to cleanse the corruption of the heart of man. The meaning, therefore, of our Saviour's speech to Nicodemus seems to be as follows: "Except a man be renewed, or born again, and not by the outward Baptism of water only, but also by the effectual inward Baptism, or Purification, of the Holy Spirit—Except a man be," thus "born," both of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see (that is, he cannot rightly understand, nor is he qualified to enter into) the kingdom of God." "Blessed," says our Saviour, "are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." It is our hearts then, and not our bodies only, that must be baptized and purified. We are naturally corrupt, indisposed to serve God, and to obey his will and commandments. "We are all," says Scripture, "gone out of the way." "Behold," says David, "I was born in sin and shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." "And you," says the apostle, "hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world—and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." We are, therefore, exhorted "not to be conformed to this present world, but to be transformed in the renewing of our minds." And the Scripture accordingly speaks of true Christians as "being cleansed by the

washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," and of their being "washed, and cleansed, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The necessity then of this death unto sin, and new birth unto righteousness, is plain and evident; for how can an unholy creature obtain the favour of an holy God, and become fitted for a holy heaven, without undergoing this change? so just, so rational is that saying of our Saviour, "Ye must be born again."

There are many other passages of Scripture which equally shew that to be a Christian is to undergo a great change in the natural disposition of our minds, and also that Baptism is intended to set forth to us this change. "As many of you," says St. Paul, "as have been *baptized* into Christ have put on Christ;" that is, ye have put on the same dispositions that were in your Saviour, such as his humility, meekness, love to God and man, devotion, heavenly mindedness; and again, "for we are buried by *Baptism* into his death, that, like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk *in newness of life*." When Paul himself first became a Christian, Ananias said to him, "Arise, and be baptized, and *wash away thy sins*." Ananias does not merely say, "Arise, and be baptized." No, these words are introductory to the words that follow. And so is it in our case. "Wash away thy sins," is an addition which we also must make to our form of Baptism. Nay, I will venture to remark, that Baptism without this is not only useless, but it is

even worse than useless. It does but aggravate our guilt; just as in the case of any other promise, he who promises but does not perform, not only makes his promise void, but is even in a worse case than if he had never made any promise at all.

The blessings of the gospel, it is true, are, on the part of God, conveyed over to us in Baptism, but they are conveyed over to us only on the supposition, that we also on our side repent earnestly of our sins, have faith in Christ, become regenerate, or born again, and walk in newness of life. If all these things are left undone, and are forgotten by us, our Baptism is then like an agreement as yet unfulfilled. It is like a contract or bargain which has been made, but which one of the parties has afterwards rendered void, through his having neglected to fulfil something that he promised in the very body of the deed. The other party is therefore let loose of course. For let not the reader suppose that there is any charm in Baptism, and that on the saying over of certain words, by a regular priest, the gates of heaven fly open to him, his heart being now renewed, and made regenerate of course. Let not any one, I say, presume to stake his salvation on the truth of so absurd a supposition as this. A person is admitted, I grant, at the time of Baptism, into the church of Christ, but it is only into the visible church; for an outward form can only admit into the outward church; and it is also in the way of charity supposed (according to the form now in use in the church of England)

that the baptized person both does and will fulfil his part, so as to avail himself of the Christian privileges held out to him.

Let us then beware of this as well as every other error, and as the Jews were continually warned by Christ and his apostles not to trust in the form of circumcision, but to remember the thing signified; so let us take warning not to trust in the form of Baptism, but to remember what Baptism signifies; for "he is not a Jew," says the apostle, "who is one outwardly;" and in like manner he is not a Christian who is one outwardly; "neither is circumcision" (nor Baptism neither) "that which is outward in the flesh, but it is that of the heart and of the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of man but of God."

It is proper that something should here be added, concerning the particular expressions which our Saviour used when he appointed this ordinance of Baptism. When he had now finished his work, when he had died for our sins on the cross, and had also risen again, and was about to ascend into heaven, "Go ye," said he to his disciples, "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." "Go ye, and baptise them in the name of the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST."

In the same sacred names of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost (or Spirit) all Christians are now baptized. Let us, therefore, close the present subject, by endeavouring to explain, in an easy and familiar manner, what it is that a true Christian, who is baptized, may be sup-

posed to mean by each of these three striking expressions.

To be baptized into these three sacred names, may be considered then as saying, in the first place, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, who made, and who now governs the world, and orders all things by his continual providence." It is to say, I believe in that God of whom the Scriptures speak, and not in those false gods which vain men have imagined to themselves, whether they be gods of wood and stone, or gods whom their own reason hath set up in opposition to the one true and only God of the Scriptures.—It is to say, secondly—I believe also in Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, and who for us men and our salvation came down from heaven, who was crucified, dead and buried, and who on the third day arose again from the dead, and ascended into heaven. I renounce, therefore, the vain hope of being my own saviour; I own my guilt and unworthiness; I trust in the merits of my Saviour's death, and in his power, to save that immortal soul which I have committed to him.—It is to say, thirdly—I believe also in the Holy Ghost. I believe in the miracles which he wrought in the days of the Apostles, whereby he testified of Jesus Christ. I believe in him also as my Sanctifier: I depend on his help for that change in my corrupt nature of which I feel the need, and while I am striving earnestly against my sins, I implore the grace of this Holy Spirit, without which I know that I can do nothing, It is to say also, that I believe in him as my Comforter. I draw my best

consolations not from the world, nor from the ordinary satisfactions of this life, still less from the indulgence of my pride or of my passions; but my highest comfort springs from those holy doctrines of the gospel which the Divine Spirit has, I trust, impressed on my heart; and from that humble persuasion which he hath given me, that, for the sake of Jesus Christ, God even now admits me into his favour, and will hereafter receive me into his glory.

Such is the true meaning of our being baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. It is to renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh, so as no longer to follow, nor be led by them. It is to chuse instead of these, and as it were in defiance of them, and in direct opposition to them, that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit which have been spoken of. It is to profess to live all our days in this faith, persevering in it through all the changes and chances of this mortal life, in spite of all the revolutions which may happen in the faith of our own country, or in that of surrounding nations. It is to determine to hold fast this faith into whatsoever new place we go, and among whatsoever company we may chance to dwell, amidst the scoff of infidels, amidst the gain saying of heretics, amidst all the discouragements or persecutions that may rise up against it in the world, amidst the evil example of degenerate and corrupt Christians, and amidst the united enmity and opposition of all wicked men. And, lastly, to take on ourselves the Christian name in baptism, is to profess, that

in this faith having lived, in this faith we trust we shall not be afraid to die, since we are well persuaded, that we shall not be ashamed of having confessed this faith on the great judgment day.

Having spoken hitherto of Baptism in general, I now mean to make the following

*Address to those Parents who are about to bring a Child to be baptized.*

A general question might, indeed, be asked—But why should infants be baptized at all? Why should they be made to promise that which, on account of their tender age, they cannot perform? To this objection the church of England gives the following answer.—Because the children promise, by means of their sureties; which promise, when they come to age, they themselves are bound to perform.—Now, I cannot help here remarking, that although the godfathers and godmothers may be the persons in this place alluded to, yet parents also must, of necessity, be considered as sureties, and even as principal sureties for the religious education of their children; for, not to mention the duty that arises from the very relationship between parent and child, is it not the parents who bring the child to be baptized? Does it not depend on the parents' will, whether the child shall be baptized or not? The Baptism of the child being then the parents' act, the parents certainly must be considered as approving of the baptismal vow, and as approving it both with respect to their children and themselves also.

You, then, that are parents, and that are about to bring a child to be baptized, ask yourselves such questions as the following.—First, Am I serious in what I am doing? Baptism, you have just seen, is a solemn thing. It is not that light matter which some people make of it. Indeed, the manner in which parents are used to bring their children to be baptized, may serve as a test or proof, by which we may try the reality of their whole religion. They who treat Christian Baptism lightly, we may depend upon it, are altogether light and giddy people; nor is this all: to be light and giddy in a case of this sort, is to be profane and wicked also.

There is something, indeed, particularly aggravated in the guilt of those parents who come in a trifling spirit to attend their child's Baptism. When the mother has just escaped from the pains and perils of child-birth; when the father has had the life of his beloved wife preserved to him, and when they both are made the happy parents of a living infant, then is the time for coming and offering up to God, who is their deliverer, and in the name of Christ, who is their Saviour, their delicate and tender offspring. Is this then the time for light and giddy mirth? or for luxury, and vanity, and ostentation? or for giving way to the evil customs of an unthinking world? and, above all, is this a time for profaning one of the most sacred ordinances of Christ? No; it is the time rather for the parents to think of their sins, and to examine into all the errors of their own past life. And as the right education of their newborn infant will now become the object of their

thought, it ought certainly to occur to them, and to impress itself very strongly on their mind, that an immortal being is now committed to their care, a being whose soul is likely to be saved or lost, according as it receives from them a good or a bad education, influence, and example. To have brought an immortal being into the world is, to every considerate mind, in itself, no light matter; and for the parents to be the means not of saving, but of damning the child to which they have given birth, is a thought too horrible to be borne. Many, therefore, who neglect their own souls, cannot endure the idea of neglecting the souls of their children, and they are for doing something at least towards, what they call, the right education of their offspring: but let all parents remember, that if they are light and profane, instead of being serious and devout in presenting their child to God in Baptism, the child is then introduced into life by an act which amounts to a solemn mockery of God. And, alas! is there not then too much reason to fear lest (to borrow some words of the church of England service) "the child should lead the remainder of his life," but too truly, "according to this beginning."

But now to be more particular. First then, *before the time of baptism comes*, be sure that you offer up to God, in secret, the most fervent prayers on the behalf of your infant. What is baptism? It is a Sacrament appointed by Christ, in order to remind us, that the natural hearts both of parents and children need to be baptized

or cleansed by God's Holy Spirit; and how is this gift of the Holy Spirit to be obtained? By prayer: for God hath said, "He will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it." As then, by prayer, you are to seek this gift for yourself, so are you to seek it for your children also. Pray then, I say, that God will give to your child "that thing which by nature he cannot have;" that he will endow him not only with kind and amiable tempers, but also with the still greater gift of his heavenly grace. Pray that he may not only be respectable, so as to do credit to his family, in the eyes of men, but that he may have the fear of God also in his heart. Pray that he may be established in the faith of Christ, and that he may be one of those who shall one day fight manfully under Christ's banners against sin, the world, and the devil, and who shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified in the midst of a proud, a careless, and a wicked world.

Let me remark next, in respect to godfathers and godmothers, that it will be your endeavour, if you are at all impressed with the important nature of Baptism, to chuse them from among the most religious persons of your acquaintance, and not merely from among those who may be most likely to help forward your child in his worldly interest; for, in a case of this sort, you must cast aside the principle of worldly policy, and you may also have to act against the rules of civility and common custom. It is probable, indeed, if you have hitherto been a thoughtless, irreligious person, that your religious friends, if you have any, will be very shy of standing godfathers or

godmothers to your children. In order, then, to take away the objections, explain to them how seriously you now intend to bring up your offspring. Assure them, that you account Baptism a very solemn thing, that you wish them to undertake for the religious education of your child on serious principles, and also that you shall be glad to take advice from them, from time to time, on this subject.

In the next place, *on the day of Baptism*, be careful to avoid all extravagant feasting and shew, as well as levity. Do not prepare a vast expensive dinner, but a decent and moderate meal; and beware of inviting a crowd of irreligious people to be your guests. Do not dress out the little infant in expensive finery, but remember that you are about to dedicate him to one, who, when he gave a feast to his followers, was pleased to offer them nothing but a few fishes and barley bread, who had not himself a house where to lay his head, and who, when he was nearly of the age of your child, was laid even in a manger.

And *when the day of Baptism is over*, begin immediately to prepare for the good education of your child, by taking all those steps which now become you. If there is any thing in your character and conduct which will reflect blame on you in the eyes of your offspring, and thus lessen their reverence for you, endeavour to correct all such things now. Are there any wrong habits which you are living in? be sure to change them now. Have you any friends, whose principles are such as to make them dangerous companions

for your child? part then from all such friends now, and begin immediately to form such connections, and to establish such religious customs in your family, as may be of serious use to your children.

Above all, lastly, take this occasion of examining whether you have ever yet fulfilled your own vow in baptism; for, if you have not, it is in vain to expect that you will do your duty religiously by your children. Examine, then, whether the great end of Baptism has been fulfilled in you; whether you have ever repented of your sins, have turned to God, have learned to deny the sinful inclinations of your heart, have refused to follow the evil customs of the world, and have become holy, as your profession of christianity requires you to be. Examine, in short, whether you have got a Christian name only, or a Christian nature also. If you cannot answer these questions satisfactorily, do not run away from the subject altogether, but rather take the opportunity which the affecting circumstance of a child's birth affords you, of considering over all your own ways, and let the season of your child's being born into a new world, be the season of your own death unto sin, and new birth unto righteousness.

THE  
PARABLE  
OF THE  
Labourers in the Vineyard.



**T**HE kingdom of heaven is compared by our Saviour to "An householder which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And again he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market place, and said unto them, go ye also into the vineyard. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle,

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and faith unto them, why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right that shall ye receive."

By the *Householder* here spoken of, our Saviour himself is intended, and by the *Labourers hired into the vineyard*, those persons are meant who enter into his service. These labourers are said to be found *standing idle in the market place*; for the gospel finds men idle, that is, not employed in God's service: they are working busily enough, perhaps, for themselves; for men will rise up early, and go to bed late, for the sake of getting money, or following pleasure, but then their diligence is of a wrong kind: they are not diligent in the way of duty to their Maker: they may be likened to a certain kind of servants, who though they may seem busy, and may get from ignorant persons some credit for being so, are nevertheless merely running on their own errands, and doing their own work, so that they are no better than idle in respect to the work which they ought to be doing for their Householder or Master. But when they become true Christians, they are no longer like those idle fellows who are always sauntering about with their arms folded, in the market place, pretending that they are in want of employment, no man having as yet hired them; but they may be compared now to a set of labourers in the vineyard or garden, who, whenever you look at them, are sure to be seen either digging, or planting, or watering, or doing, in short, whatever is most

wanting in the place where they are working : and they have always an eye moreover to the honour and interests of the great Householder, their Master.

The Householder is said to *go out at different hours of the day* to hire these servants. This signifies that the light of Revelation was sent at different periods of the world to the different people in it, and in particular to the Jews at one period, and the Gentile nations at another. The Jews had been much offended at seeing Christ address himself to the Gentiles, who, as they thought, not having been called into the Church or Vineyard of God at an early period of the world, ought not to be received at a later hour. Our Saviour, therefore, makes use of this Parable or Story, as a convenient means of shewing how unreasonable these Jewish prejudices were.

I mean here, however, to accommodate the Parable to the purpose of shewing in what manner the Gospel often addresses itself to men in different periods of life, calling one at an early age, and one at a much later, into the same Vineyard of Christ. We are in no danger of erring exactly as the Jews did, by raising objections to Christ's calling the great body of the Gentile nations into his Church. We may be in great danger, however, of acting much in the same spirit with the Jews, and if we do so, that spirit is most likely to shew itself in our objecting to extend the privileges of the Gospel to some poor outcasts, or aged sinners among ourselves.

First, then, I will put the case of one who is

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brought to obey the Gospel in the morning of life, and is one of the youngest of the labourers in our Lord's Vineyard. He sets out well, as I will suppose, and he goes on well through all the following stages of his life; even his most early prayers are not a mere matter of form, but they spring out of a persuasion already rising up in his mind, that he entirely depends on God, and needs the help of his holy spirit. It pleases God, in answer to his infant prayers, to strengthen this child against his early temptations, so that he does as Christ commands, and not as wicked children may require or expect of him. Such a child as this will also be diligent in learning his book and improving his time, for he will be like the labouring men in the Vineyard, spoken of in the Parable, and not like the idle ones in the market place.

Now what a vast quantity of good may such a person be the means of doing in the course of a long life on earth. First of all, he is a blessing to his young connections and school-fellows, for he will often reprove vice and irreligion in them, even though it should be much against the modesty of his own natural inclinations; then he grows up to be a bold witness for God in the face of all the gay and unthinking young men or women among whom he is thrown in early life; next he proceeds to do good about the village or town where he is settled: after this perhaps he marries, in consequence of which his wife, and all her connections, and his own offspring also, have the advantage of observing him; they remark his humble, candid, pious, and affectionate

spirit, and his diligent and self-denying life, and they profit both by his kind services and his example. Now too his income very probably increases through his good character and industry, and hence he is able to assist the poor, the fatherless, the widow, and to pay for the instruction of the ignorant; for he spends little on himself; having no vices he has few wants; and his family being trained to religious habits, and preserved from the gay and expensive customs of the world, have few wants also. Thus is happiness of all kinds spread abroad. He explains also, as he has opportunity, those christian doctrines which have led him into this life of usefulness, and is a great promoter of the gospel, so that a little world of christians is continually gathering together all around him, and even a new generation is coming forward, which shall, by-and-by, rise up and call him blessed. In the midst of all this usefulness, however, he is very modest and lowly; he gives God the praise of every good thing he does, and he is sincerely pained when flattering and inconsiderate people load him with their extravagant commendations, for he sees a thousand faults in himself which he is much engaged in overcoming, though others perceive them not; he is conscious of neglecting many an opportunity of doing good, and of failing to suppress sufficiently many an evil thought, and though some irreligious people may fancy that he already carries things too far, as they absurdly term it, yet there is nothing of which he is himself more sure than that he falls short in every duty, and especially in those things of which they

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least see the importance, I mean in zeal for religion, in the duties of prayer and praise, and in all the feelings and expressions of gratitude to his Creator and Redeemer. But while we are thus describing the amiable character of a Christian, let it be remarked also, that he meets with various difficulties, and is exposed to not a few misrepresentations. His virtuous singularity, for instance, is considered by some who do not understand his principles, to be unnecessary preciseness, and is thought to arise from a conceited or disobliging spirit; his courage in reproving vice, if unsuccessful, is called by those whom he reproves, impertinence; his activity in doing good is not seldom ascribed to forwardness; and even his extraordinary liberality is accounted for, by those who do not care to follow his example, by saying, that it is mere vanity, or lavish imprudence; and above all, his piety is apt to be thought, by the impious and irreligious, to be mere hypocrisy, or at best a poor pitiable sort of weakness. Thus, then, while the Christian has many peculiar hopes, and joys, and consolations on the one hand, he experiences many trials and hardships on the other. Nevertheless, he bears up under them all; many of them indeed appear light to him in comparison of what they seem to other men, and grow more and more light as he becomes used to them. He goes on therefore cheerful and contented; he labours much, he suffers much, he renounces much, he contends much in the cause of Christ, and he does this in every place to which he moves, in every changing situation and circumstance, and in every sea-

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son of life through which he passes. And now at last, after a long life, death closes in upon him; he looks with thankfulness back to what is past, and with composure to the important and decisive hour that is approaching; he trusts, indeed, not in himself but in his Saviour, for after all, he is but "an unprofitable servant, having done no more than it was his duty to do;" but he has much comfortable proof that his christian faith has not been a mere name; and he is able to take up the same language with the apostle, and to say, with a measure of the same confidence, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me in the great day." This then is one of those, who, to borrow the phrase in the parable, may be said to have "borne the whole burthen and heat of the day."

There is another class of persons who may now be spoken of, as entering into the vineyard of Christ at a somewhat later hour; at the age, as we will suppose, of five and twenty and thirty. These have lost an hour indeed; they have idled away one precious season of life. Alas! also, it is to be feared, that during the heat and self-confidence of youth, they have done much evil, as well as neglected to do good. Perhaps it has also happened that they have already formed some rash connection, and established themselves on some irreligious plan; but now they repent; they break through all difficulties; they turn out of the path in which they had been setting off in

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life, and they turn into the vineyard of Christ: they become humble, diligent, and useful Christians; for even these also give a good part at least of their health and strength to the cause of their Saviour, and with grief and shame at having been thus far idle, they become fellow-labourers with those happier persons already spoken of.

But let us come to a class of persons who repent somewhat later still; I mean at the age of forty or fifty. How affecting is the condition of such persons when it is well considered! they now discover that they have been all their lives living, as it were, to no purpose; that the whole of these forty or fifty years has been idly thrown away, or if spent in labour, that it has been mere labour in vain; for even though they may have been diligent, yet they have been merely diligent in doing their own will, and not the will of God; they have been working in their own vineyard, and not in the vineyard of Christ; they have been year after year pushing their own fortune, building up their own credit, exalting their own consequence, indulging their own ease, following their own pleasure, caring about their own interest, or family interest, while the great interests of the kingdom of Christ have been quite out of the question; and now therefore they have to repent, perhaps, of the very things they had been the most proud of; they have also to resist many sinful habits which are become, as it were, a second nature; they have to disentangle themselves from a multitude of irreligious connections, whose opinions have hitherto ruled

over them; they have to unteach even their own children many a false principle which they had taught them: with many a weary and painful step, they have to measure back the whole ground which they have been treading; and they have to undo, as it were, every thing which for fifty years they have been doing. When more than half of life is over, they have to enter upon the work which they were sent into the world to do; but at length they hire themselves into the vineyard of Christ, and he receives them, though it is the ninth hour: and now they husband well their time, and begin to be fruitful in every good work; and whatever they do, they do all to the glory of God: they perform what he commands, and simply because he commands it: they become a part of the church of Christ, and are numbered among the labourers in his vineyard.

But if the case of such as were last spoken of is affecting, what shall be said of those aged persons whom it still remains for us to describe! Some there are (but, alas! it is to be feared, that it is the case of very few) who even at seventy, or more than seventy years old, repent, and become the servants of Christ. When scarcely an hour of life remains, when the evening is closing in and "the night cometh when no man can work," then it pleases God to send his grace possibly to a few of these also, and they go for the short hour that remains into the same vineyard of Christ.

How mournful is the view which we have now to take of such an aged sinner's condition. Here is a person, the whole term of whose earthly ex-

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istence (one poor uncertain hour excepted) has been spent in a sinful course. How plain is it in his case, that there can be no such thing as merit, and that if ever he is saved it must be through the mere mercies of his God: a doctrine, indeed, which is equally true in the case of all. Let us run over the woeful tale of his wicked life, and as before we thought fit to describe an eminent and distinguished Christian, so now by way of making the difference more particularly striking, let us draw the picture of one, who though no thief or murderer, and therefore not accounted one of the most abandoned of mankind, yet is lying under a load of much more than ordinary guilt. Those persons, indeed, who feel themselves guilty of any part of the crimes we shall enumerate, should take their share of the reproof, and if they have not repented, so as to enter into the vineyard of Christ, they should remember, that though they may be criminals of a smaller size, yet they are still remaining under condemnation.

To a perverse and disobedient childhood has succeeded (as we will suppose) a wild and vicious youth, and then a proud and ambitious manhood, and after this a fretful or covetous old age. In the course of his long life many temptations have broken in upon him, and by turns he has yielded to them all. Many different situations have been filled by him, and in each, as he now sees, he has either neglected or betrayed his trust. He has been a negligent and bad father, an unreasonable, nay, secretly also, an unfaithful husband, a careless inattentive brother, a hollow, flattering,

and designing friend; perhaps, also, a mean time-serving elector, and even a mischievous common acquaintance. Do you ask what has been the turn of his common conversation? instead of being pious, useful, benevolent, candid, and sincere, it has at one time been proud and passionate, at another vain and flourishing, at another slanderous and revengeful; now again it has been selfish, crafty, and dissembling, often also daringly impious and profane, and not seldom exceedingly polluting and impure. Do you ask what have been the sinful deeds he has done? O what a dreadful variety has there been in them! At one time he has been trying to over-reach his fellow-trader; at another he has been endeavouring to seduce some unhappy maiden; at one time he is seen quarrelling with his neighbour; at another he falls out with one of his own family, after which he grows mad with every one around him, and, at last, equally mad and out of humour with himself. He has been selfish, griping, and avaricious on all occasions, and what he has saved or gained by oppression and fraud, he has spent on his profligacy: he has got drunk with the money which he has acquired by dishonesty, and he has paid for his debauchery at night by the sum which he has contrived in the morning to keep back from the poor. At the same time he has been turbulent, factious, and complaining, always talking of what is amiss in others, and very sudden and severe in judging them, but very proud and confident of himself, disdaining even the smallest blame. Would you get into favour

with him, you must flatter him at every word : and you will please him best by doing it grossly and to his face, for he is quite used to praise ; he has long lived among those who look up to him as their patron, or gape at him as their principal wit, or glory in him as their chief songster, possibly as the chairman of their drinking club, and as their merry leader in debauchery.

To all these sins he adds that of being the decided enemy of every religious man. Is the gospel preached at his very door ? He stands in the front rank of it's enemies : he denies it's efficacy, makes a joke of it's doctrines, reviles it's followers, and is the avowed hinderer of it's progress. Christianity, indeed, is against him, and, therefore, it is no wonder that he is against Christianity. Hence it is that the religion of every man around him, however pure and excellent, if it is but zealous and fervent, is declared, without distinction, to be mere hypocrisy, enthusiasm, bigotry, and cant.

But let us look a little also to the various *consequences* of his life of sin : Who can trace a thousandth part of the miseries which have arisen even from one single source, I mean from the levity and inconsideration which have made one leading feature in his character ? Who can calculate the effects of all those evil principles which he has scattered at random, reaching even to distant places and generations ! Who can calculate the mischief which he may have caused even in one of his light convivial hours ? View the inscription on that gravestone, which is now almost overgrown with thorns. Ah ! it is the name of

an old companion, an alehouse friend, who once was used to sing with him, in one joyful chorus, "*the praises of the flowing bowl*," and who thus was encouraged in those habits of intemperance which led to that untimely grave. Let us open one other source of no less painful reflection. Behold that miserable female, once the gay partner of his guilty pleasures, whom if he has not been the first to seduce, he has at least carried on and confirmed in a life of sin, and whom he has left afterwards to sink in want, to grow loathsome through disease, and to become a nuisance to the village or the town; he has helped to ruin but not to deliver her; he has soon left her to the tender mercies of some of her own sex, as hardened as herself, among whom she has sunk; and groaned, and died. Which way then, I say, shall this aged sinner turn his eyes? Every scene, every place, every month and day of his life which he can call back to remembrance reminds him of some sin. Shall he look to some of his more reputable actions? Alas! even when his conduct has been most creditable, his motives have been unchristian and impure. "True, I have had some character," he now says to himself, "but I have had no title to it. Men have not known me, or if a few have known me and yet praised me, they have praised me because they have wanted to carry some point of their own by pleasing me; nay, my companions have even praised me for what was evil, for the same people seem now, methinks, to blame me in proportion as they discern any thing in me that is good."

Thus the recollection of the applauses he used to receive from these wicked men is become one aggravation of his pain.

But shall he look to his more innocent and early years? Alas! the review of his infancy only serves to remind him how naturally and how soon he went astray; how soon "he forsook the guide of his youth, and forgot the covenant of his God." Thus, if he looks backward, all is misery, and horror, and despair. Shall he then look forward and comfort himself by thinking how effectually he will repair all the evil he has done? But how shall he now repair it? Of those whom he has corrupted many are dead, and of the survivors very few can now be found. Go then and bring these few back to God. Alas! one will mock, another will dissemble, a third will despise. Go try to reclaim even the children of thine own loins, who are all trained through thy means in an evil course. Nay, even these also will scoff at thy rebuke, and say, "Our old father is grown troublesome and peevish through age; he is turned religious only because he has just done with this life, and has got one foot in the grave."

What then, I say, can this aged sinner do to remedy the evils he has caused? he can only abhor himself for what is passed, and repent sincerely of all that he has done. See him then at length abhorring himself, and "repenting in dust and ashes." See him retiring to his chamber, and, for the first time, communing seriously with his own heart. See him reviewing the whole of his past life, from the first dawn of reason to the present hour, endeavouring to survey with exact-

ness his thoughts, words, and actions, and all his most secret practices, intentions, and inclinations. See him meditating also on his numberless omissions, taking the law of God for his rule, and beginning now, for the first time, to discover what manner of person he has been. How does he stand amazed at his own former stupidity and blindness, and hardness of heart, and how astonished also at the patience of God, which has so long borne with him! And now his heart relents, the tears of penitential sorrow begin to flow; the lion also is changed into a lamb, and the same person who before might have been compared to the woman in the gospel, "out of whom there went seven devils," or to "Saul when breathing fury and slaughter," may now be likened to the Magdalen weeping at the feet of Jesus, or to Paul trembling and astonished, and crying out, as he lay on the ground, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do," or to the same Paul when it was afterwards said of him, "behold he prayeth!" With trembling limbs, and with a body bowed down with age, behold then this repenting sinner walking to that public worship which he had so long neglected; with weak and failing eyes he opens the Scripture; at the age of seventy he begins to inquire with child-like simplicity into the nature of the gospel, and knowing how short his time is he makes haste to obey it. And now, perhaps, his old companions deride him, for as he once sneered at others who were religious, and called them all hypocrites, so is he now sneered at, and called a hypocrite in

his turn : he becomes the scoff of the drunkards, and the merry jest of the profane ; and they that “ sit in the gate make songs of him.” Now also the very sins of his youth, which had been scarcely mentioned before, are brought forward by his former favourites and friends as present evidence against him ; his crimes are even aggravated, and are all blazed abroad : but it is one proof of his sincerity, that even these cutting reproaches do not shake him from his purpose, nor induce him to turn back to his old companions. No ; they may laugh ; they may smile at what they call his pretended sanctity ; but in truth he is no hypocrite.

“ ————— The Tear  
That drops upon his Bible is sincere.”

He is disposed to doubt, indeed, for a time, his own sincerity, for his guilt is so great, and the blessings of the gospel, including as they do the gift of eternal life, appear so large in his eyes, that he cannot at once raise his hopes so high. His sincerity is proved, however, by his proceeding to repair, as far as he has opportunity, each evil that he has done ; by his mourning over what he cannot cure, and by the determination of his mind, through the help of Divine grace, to walk for the future in newness of life. In short, he feels that if his life were prolonged a thousand years, and youth and health were restored to him, he should chuse to spend his strength and the utmost length of his days in the service of the same Master, and to be a labourer in the same vineyard.

But here, methinks, some objector rises up and says, “ What then shall this man be accepted

of God, like him who has been moral and orderly all his days, or like the first person you mentioned?' We shall now answer this objection by proceeding with the parable.

The Jews are there represented as *murmuring against the good man of the house*, on account of his rewarding the more late and early labourers, the ancient Jews and the newly converted Gentiles, by "giving each of them a penny, saying, these last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us who have borne the whole burthen\*and heat of the day. But he answered one of them and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong, didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is and go thy way, I will give unto this last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?" It was no injury to the Jews that the poor Gentiles were admitted, though at a later hour, into the church, and the Jews had therefore no right to complain; on the contrary, they ought to have rejoiced at it. In like manner it can be no injury to those among us, who may have served Christ from our youth, that any poor out-cast should be admitted to the same Christian privileges with ourselves, and we also ought to rejoice as the angels of God are said to do over one sinner that repenteth. Again it may be remarked, that even the first calling of the Jews arose not from any superior merit in them, but from the sovereign goodness of God; and surely, therefore, it was most unreasonable in those people to complain of God's extending the same mercy to the Gentiles.

Much in the same manner it may be remarked, in respect to the present day, that the salvation even of the best of men arises not from any merit of their own, but merely from God's free mercy in Christ, and surely, therefore, one pardoned sinner among us ought not to complain of the extension of the same pardon to another.

But the parable in the two last verses of it proceeds a step further, - for it is there added by our Saviour, "Is thine eye evil because mine is good?" which is, as if he said, "What do you take offence then at my being so merciful? Does it provoke your envy to see a vile Gentile called at the eleventh hour, and made equal to yourselves who profess to have been the people of God from the beginning, and to have borne the whole burthen and heat of the day?" Some very awful words are then added, wherein it is implied, that they who were ready to make this objection, brought thereby their own religious character into suspicion, and that these very penitents of the eleventh hour, whom they now presumed to despise, should hereafter even take place above them, for it is said, "So the first shall be last, and the last first, for many are called, but few chosen."

These words appear to be a prophecy of our Judge, which relates to the great day of judgment. Then many a popular but irreligious character, many a one who has been praised to the stars in this ignorant and misjudging world, and whose supposed virtues have both deceived himself, and dazzled all around him, shall sink at once into everlasting shame and disgrace, while

many a poor despised, yet repenting sinner, shall come forward and receive his crown of glory. Oh! what a wonderful change in many of the appearances which we now see shall we witness on the day of judgment! Let us not fail to remark, that then also many a false, though flaming, professor of the gospel, many a vain, forward, and conceited teacher, many a self-confident enthusiast, and many a narrow-minded and fiery bigot, who has spent his life in little else than in judging and condemning others, shall be brought forward in the face of the assembled world, and shall receive *his own* condemnation. Then also many a diffident and trembling believer, and many a meek and lowly Christian, who has been labouring with little noise in some obscure corner of his Lord's vineyard, and on whom the bigots, not seeing him among their party, have presumptuously dealt damnation, shall take that prize which has been denied to those who set themselves up as judges over him, and shall be bid to enter into the joy of his Lord. "So the first shall be last, and the last first, for many are called, but few chosen."

THE  
CONVERSION  
OF  
ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE.

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PAUL was one of the chief apostles. The greater part of the epistles of the New Testament were written by him, and it is therefore well worth the while of every Christian, to bestow some pains in considering both his character and his wonderful history.

In order, properly, to introduce the present subject of Paul's Conversion, it is necessary first to say something of the ancient prophecies concerning Christ, by which means we shall shew the good reason which Paul had for believing in him at the time when he appeared.

The Old Testament prophecies of our Saviour are many; for his appearance on earth was an event of vast importance; and it is no wonder, therefore, that early notice of it was given in the sacred writings. In the beginning of the world, when our first parents had sinned, the sentence of death immediately passed upon them; but no sooner was this curse pronounced, than the merciful promise was also given, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head;" a promise which related to Christ, though

as yet dark and mysterious, and which was intended to excite, even from the first, man's humble faith and trust. As the age of the world advanced, the promise grew brighter and brighter. It was said to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed:" and soon afterwards, it was added, "In Isaac shall thy seed be blessed." From time to time the promise was renewed; "there was to be a root of Jesse that was to reign over the Gentiles, and in him should the Gentiles trust:" and again, it was still more distinctly said, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Emanuel," or God with us.) And again, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." In the 53d of Isaiah, all the particulars of his coming are mentioned; "He was to be despised and rejected of men; he was to bear our griefs, and carry our infirmities; he was to be brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he was not to open his mouth; and he was also to make his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." And now the long-expected Saviour, "the desire of all nations," appears. Prophecy is fulfilled, for his birth and parentage agree with the declarations made concerning him by the prophets. Miracles also are performed by him, and in the very manner which had been foretold—"the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead

are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them." Every divine virtue appears also in his character, and divine truth drops from his lips. He now calls together his apostles, to whom seventy disciples are added. An infant church is formed, the seed of that great Christian church which was to follow. The proofs that Jesus Christ was sent down from God are increased, and every day affords some fresh evidence in favour of christianity. It is the cause of God, and it prevails. "The world," says the Pharisees, "are gone after him." "Hosannah to the Son of David; Hosannah in the highest." And now the twelve are sent forth expressly to preach the Gospel, and to declare the coming of Christ.

But where is Paul the Apostle? Is not he also among the twelve? No, it is remarkable, that in reading through the four evangelists, we do not so much as find any mention of his name. Surely, then, he must have been ignorant that Jesus was born, and that the promised Saviour was come. He must have dwelt in some distant corner of the land, in some village, to which the fame of Christ had happened not yet to reach. —No, he was of Tarsus, a neighbouring city of Galicia, and he dwelt even in Jerusalem. But surely, then, Paul must have been some heathen, who was unacquainted with the Old Testament prophecies; some creature of Cæsar, engaged in mere affairs of state, who could know nothing of the Jewish Messiah. No, he was a Jew, and even one of the Pharisees, who were the strictest sect of the Jews; he was "bred also at the feet

of Gamaliel."—Perhaps, then, he was examining the Old Testament evidence, or he was observing the character and the actions of the Messiah, that he might know whether this was truly the Son of God.—But at length Christ is crucified, and now many additional prophecies are fulfilled; for it was written, "That Christ should suffer." "The soldiers also part his garments among them, and for his vesture they cast lots." He rises also from the grave, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.—"He breaks the bonds of death asunder, because it was not possible for him to be holden of them." And now also we read that he shews himself to a variety of persons; at one time, "to Cephas, then to the twelve;" and then his resurrection is made manifest, for he appears "to five hundred brethren at once." Does Paul come forward now, and own he is convinced? Oh, no; the apostles go forth, Paul alone excepted, and the disciples "go forth," on every side, and "with great power give they witness of the resurrection of Christ from the dead." Behold the Saviour, having finished his work, ascending triumphantly into heaven, while *a cloud receives him out of their sight.* After this event, surely every one must believe. After this event, Peter, even Peter who had denied his Lord, waxes bold in the very presence of his murderers; unbelieving Thomas having long before been constrained to cry out, "My Lord and my God." Now too, the flock of Christians begins to gather itself together, and at length "The day of Pentecost is fully come;" "Three thousand are added to the church on one day, of

such as shall be saved." The gift of tongues is bestowed, and the apostles, "having tarried at Jerusalem for the promise of the spirit, go forth on every side, having received power from on high, the Lord also confirming the word with signs following."

But where, I say again, is Paul of Tarsus? Is he not now joined to the apostles? Is he not now a convert to the cause of Christ?—No; it is remarkable, on the contrary, that the first time when we read of him, is on the event of Stephen's being stoned to death; for it is said of Paul on that occasion, that "he kept the raiment of them that slew him." Are you not now astonished at this wicked Paul, at this Jew, this Pharisee, this Hebrew of the Hebrews, this Doctor and Teacher in Israel, that he should be seen holding the clothes of those who were stoning Stephen, for Stephen was a preacher of Christ, a preacher of Paul's own Messiah.—But let us next observe Paul beginning to "breathe out slaughter against the Christians," and applying to the chief priests for "authority to bind the Christians and put them to death." It usually happens, whenever the gospel is made known, that a certain time is afforded for laying open the great evidences and doctrines of it; and if these are neglected, and the ordinary time is passed, I believe it often comes to pass, that great hardness of heart follows, and that the unbeliever then is not an unbeliever only, but perhaps also a hinderer of the gospel, nay, a persecutor even, and injurious. Paul had now had the full opportunity of thus examining the truth of Christianity; he had been

in the way of hearing much of Christ, and he might, if he pleased, have satisfied himself of the reality of his resurrection ; nay, he had seen the martyr Stephen die in this very faith, and had himself “ beheld his face shine like that of an angel ;” but Paul had smothered his convictions ; pride and prejudice, and many angry passions, conceit of his own wisdom, trust in his own righteousness, and confidence in his own religious opinions, together with bigotry to his sect ; these causes, or causes like these, disguising themselves under the sacred name of religion, hurried him even into the hottest persecutions, “ for he verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and he persecuted the believers in Christ, even unto death, binding and delivering into prison, both men and women, punishing them also in every city, and giving his voice against them ; and being exceedingly mad against them, he compelled them to blaspheme.” And now what shall we say ? Can your patience any longer bear with this unworthy Jew ? Are you not ready to grow mad yourselves at the madness of this horrible persecutor ?—“ But God’s ways are not as our ways, neither are his thoughts as our thoughts.” Paul is struck to the ground as he is going on one of these bloody errands to Damascus. But in what way is he struck ? Is it then in vengeance ? Is it with a thunderbolt, so as never to rise again ? Is he doomed never to lift up his eyes any more, except “ in hell, being in torments ?” No ; the time which I am now to speak of is the time when, as he thankfully expresses it in one of his

epistles, he is permitted *to see Jesus*. "Suddenly there appeared a light in the firmament, above the brightness of the Sun, and a voice from heaven, saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, who art thou, Lord? and he said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he said, Lord, what shall I do? And the voice said, Arise, and stand upon thy feet, for I have appointed thee to be a chosen vessel to go unto the people and to the Gentiles, to whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to bring them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, and to give them an inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith that is in me."

We know from the Scriptures what were the consequences of this wonderful Conversion of St. Paul. He was numbered from this time among the apostles of Christ, and though in one sense he considered himself as "the least" of them all, and as not even "meet to be called an apostle, because he had persecuted the church of God;" yet he tells us, nevertheless, that in point of apostolic rank and authority, he was "not a whit behind the chiefest of them;" and he also "laboured more abundantly than they all," every where suffering the most cruel persecution from his old friends the Jews, and every where "preaching that faith which once he destroyed."

And now, what are we to learn from this extraordinary story?—In the first place, it appears to me, that we may gain from it a very strong

argument in favour of the general truth of Christianity.

It is fair, I think, when any one quits his party, and goes over to the contrary side, to allow that he does it honestly, and on conviction, provided it is plain, he has no reason to expect to gain any thing by the change. Now Paul had nothing to gain; on the contrary he had much to lose by becoming a Christian; and it is therefore reasonable to suppose, that he was very sincere as to his conversion. In general, it must be a large bribe that must tempt a man to bear the reproach and mortification which follow him when he goes over from his party. But what was the bribe offered to Paul? What in the world could he gain by his conversion? Could he get by it, either wealth, or honour, or ease, or earthly satisfaction! No, he well knew that he was now likely rather to sacrifice his wealth and all his worldly honour, that he was now about to bid adieu to ease and every earthly comfort and enjoyment; he well knew that all his best and dearest friends were now about to turn against him, and that as he had once persecuted others, so now he was about to suffer the most bitter persecution in his turn. "For this cause," says he, in one place, "the Jews sought to stone me!" and no wonder, for who is there whom in general people are more ready to stone than a deserter from their own party? Were not all the other apostles also at this time exposed to a variety of sufferings? Had not Christ himself been crucified? And had not Paul, therefore, every reason to expect the same "great fight of

afflictions," whenever he should profess himself converted into an apostle? Accordingly we find him afterwards giving the following description of himself:—"He was stoned, he was beaten with rods, twice he suffered shipwreck: he was persecuted from city to city; he was in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of his own countrymen, in perils by false brethren, in perils of the sea, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in weariness and painfulness, in watching often, in cold and nakedness." Such was his treatment now he was become a Christian; and let us just ask also, how did he bear it? "Being defamed," says he, "we entreat; being persecuted, we suffer it." "We are accounted the very filth of the earth, and the offscouring of all things to this day."—"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." When we consider further how every temper of Paul's mind was also changed, how the lion was turned into a lamb, and how he, who had been once a persecutor, became "gentle and affectionate among his people, even as a nurse cherisheth her children;" surely, it must be owned, that we have in Paul a striking evidence, both of the truth, and also of the excellency of Christianity.

But I think we may gain from the same story of St. Paul's conversion, a considerable degree of insight into some of the christian doctrines; I mean for instance, that we may learn something of the

sovereignty and power of God, and of his long forbearance and forgiveness, and of the exceeding riches of his grace in Jesus Christ. It is the opinion of some who have never attended to the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, that every man is saved by the merit of his own works, and by using merely his own natural power and strength, and not by any act of pardon, or by any special help or grace of the Almighty. Now how remarkably does the story of Paul's Conversion fly in the face of every such supposition! for what had Paul done, in order either to merit, or in any degree to procure, that mercy which was shewn him? What had he done, in order to induce God to stop him on his way to Damascus? The case is a very striking one in this view. Paul was breathing slaughter at the very time when the voice from heaven spoke to him; "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me!" These words imply that he was at that moment persecuting Christ. God, in this case, very evidently exerted his own sovereign power, and bestowed freely on Paul the most unmerited grace, in agreement indeed with those other passages of Scripture, "For I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion; so then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." In like manner, God is said to have "saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace." But we observed also, that the long forbearance and forgiveness of God, are here remarkably manifest: Paul was

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intended to serve as an eminent and most encouraging example to the believers of all ages in this respect. "For this cause," says he, "I obtained mercy, that in me first, Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." It was by this deep sense of his guilt, and by the remembrance of his own infinite obligations, that Paul was now qualified for his work. When he went about preaching to the Gentiles, if he had to encourage any poor despairing sinner among them to repent, "Unto me," he could now say, "who was once a persecutor and injurious—Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." "For this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

But there is also a bad use which may possibly be made of this story of Paul's Conversion. Weak men, I believe, have sometimes taken occasion from it to confirm themselves in their errors, and wicked men in their sins. Some enthusiasts, for instance, have been disposed to fancy that they also may be converted like Paul by a voice from heaven, or at least by some impression that would nearly amount to the same thing. To such persons I reply, What then, do you imagine the case of Paul to be quite a common one? Paul himself did not so consider it. He often stood astonished at the strangeness of it. "I am as one," said he, "born out of due time." He thus compares

himself to a person, whose birth had been quite out of the common course, and undoubtedly, both in the lateness and in the manner of his conversion, his case is a direct exception to that of most Christians, who were either to come after him, or had gone before him. In fact, the Conversion of Paul was neither more nor less than a miracle, and we might as well expect all the other kind of miracles which were wrought on the bodies of men in the time of Christ to be repeated in our days, as expect to see miracles again wrought in order to the conversion of mens' souls.

But wicked men, I also remarked, may perhaps take occasion from this story, to encourage themselves in their sins. "True, say they, we cannot convert ourselves; it belongs to God alone to convert us; and we will therefore sit still and wait, or in other words, we will continue in sin (for waiting is sinning in the case of these people) until God shall stop us in our mad career, as he did Paul in his way to Damascus. Where, say they, is the use of diligence and labour, or of reading the Scriptures, or of any of the means of grace? God can save us without these. We live in hopes, that he will convert us some day or other, as he did Paul, while we are not thinking of it; and though to be sure we remain in the mean time in our sins, and in the gross neglect of the proper means of our salvation, yet we plead the great apostle Paul for our example." You plead the apostle Paul's example, do you? or rather you plead the example of Paul *before* he was an apostle, and when he was yet unconverted. Well then, if you plead his example at all, you may as

well plead it to the full extent to which this plea can be carried. Now Paul not only sinned in the common way, and neglected the proper means of his salvation as you do, but he did what was still worse; he was even “a blasphemer of Christ, and a persecutor and injurious.” Go then, I say, since you plead the example of Paul, and follow the example throughout. Go then, and blaspheme Christ as he did. Go, persecute the present followers of Jesus. Go and hunt them out as he did in every city, and bind them, both men and women, and then put them to death. Oh, no; you are afraid of venturing any such length in wickedness as this.—But remember, my deluded reader, that your plea, if it will warrant you in any one trespass against God, will warrant you even in this. Remember, that whosoever at any time encourages himself, even in the smallest sin, either of omission or commission, by unconverted Paul’s example, may, on the very same principle, encourage himself even in the greatest. Be afraid, therefore, to tread on this dangerous ground. Let not such kind of arguments, as I have supposed you to use, be endured even for a moment, but consider them as the most complete perversions of the gospel, and as some of the worst temptations of the devil.

This leads me to address to you another observation on the same subject. God was pleased to convert Paul, as I apprehend, not as your argument has supposed, *because* he was a sinner, but *although* he was a sinner. Paul’s sin did not invite God’s grace, it only did not hinder it: nay, if his sin, which was great already, had risen to be

somewhat greater, we are not without reason for supposing that the same mercy would not have been extended to him. "But I obtained mercy," says Paul, "because I did it ignorantly and in unbelief." This observation of Paul seems to imply, that if the crimes he committed had also been committed knowingly and wilfully, such would then have been the aggravation of them, that possibly they would not have been pardoned.

And now, reader, you may trace in this respect, perhaps, an important distinction between his case and yours. Paul sinned ignorantly, but you are for sinning wilfully, for so your very argument supposes. Paul "obtained mercy because he did it in mere ignorance and unbelief;" you, perhaps, may *not* obtain mercy, because as to the evil you do, you do it not ignorantly but with your eyes open; nay, let me add, that the very plea which you use of being encouraged in your sloth or sin, by the free grace and mercy of the gospel, is itself the greatest aggravation of your guilt: the very excuse you use renders your case dreadful, and who knows, whether, if the same excuse is persisted in, your case may not thereby be rendered desperate!

To sum up all in a few words, the fair account of the whole matter seems to be this. Paul was a great opposer of the gospel, and therefore a great sinner. His ignorance and unbelief, which led him into this opposition, were undoubtedly criminal, for he might have known better if he would; nevertheless, they afforded some small palliation of his guilt. God, on the whole, for

the sake of his own purposes, and not on account of any merit in Paul, for there is never any merit in man, was pleased to convert this persecutor by the power of his grace, and to convert him even by a miracle, for God, as it evidently appears by the succeeding part of Paul's history, had great ends to fulfil by means of this extraordinary convert. One of these ends was, that a striking proof might thus be given of the truth of that new religion which the world in general, and which the Jews especially, were so ill prepared to believe; and another end was, in order that a clear manifestation might be made of the sovereignty and power of God, and of the exceeding riches of his grace, which nothing, perhaps, would shew forth more effectually than the conversion of this unworthy Jew into an apostle. These, as has been already observed, seem to be some of the great points which the story of Paul's Conversion is calculated to prove. It is calculated to prove (let it be carefully remembered) that God *sometimes may*, and that he *always can*, convert even the most notorious sinners, and even in the very midst of their wickedness, but not that he *always*, no, nor even that he *often* will; still less does it prove, that God will convert any one again by a miracle. God works ordinarily by means, and he himself has expressly appointed, in the case of Christianity, what shall be his means. These are the preaching of the gospel, (for which end this very Paul was sent forth) the reading of the Scriptures, and the various other helps to salvation with which men, according to their several circumstances, are fa-

voured. If we neglect these, I grant it is still not impossible (as Paul's story shews) that God may, in some extraordinary way, convert us; I insist, however, that it is highly improbable that he will do so, and the more sin we commit, the less likely should we consider our conversion to be, just as we see that in the case of Paul, the addition of the sin of wilfulness to his other crimes might have proved an aggravation that would have put him beyond the hope of mercy. We read of one dying thief who repented on the cross, and was certainly saved; but the Scriptures name no other instance of any thing like a real and availing death-bed repentance. We are thus taught, that no dying sinner should harden his heart through despair, and yet that no living sinner should presume on God's giving him grace to repent in his last hours. We read, in like manner, of only one Paul who was converted by means of a voice from heaven, or while he was breathing slaughter against the Christians; but, on the other hand, when the apostles and disciples were regularly met together, and "were all with one accord in one place," at the time of Pentecost, we are told that the numbers converted even in one day were *three thousand*, for God was pleased to give his peculiar blessing on this first instance of the public preaching of the apostles by an extraordinary effusion of his Holy Spirit.

Whenever we apply ourselves, therefore, to the story of Paul's Conversion, let us bring with us an honest mind. We may, if we please, "wrest

this," as well as other parts of Scripture, "to our own destruction;" but we may also draw from it, if we are so disposed, the strongest confirmation of our faith, and the greatest encouragement to repent of our sins, and to put confidence in our Saviour's mercy.

# LOOK AT HOME;

OR THE

## ACCUSERS ACCUSED.

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A GREAT man used to say, that he never saw a criminal dragged to execution without asking himself, "Who knows whether this poor fellow may not, on the whole, be guilty of less sin than I am?" This is a question which it would be well if we would all of us put to ourselves, when we see any of our fellow-creatures punished; for I am persuaded, that many of us have sins, which, all things considered, deserve the rod just as much as the sins of those people who endure chastisement for them. I am sorry to add, that in general, we are so far from putting to ourselves any such question as I have spoken of, that we do what is directly the contrary. We contrive to praise, instead of taking occasion to blame ourselves, when we see another in fault. We immediately say, "Well, I thank God, I never did any thing so bad as this. I never in my life did what Mr. Such-a-one has done. I am not so bad as he, however;" and then we fall foul on his whole character, and think to shew our goodness by the extreme severity which we use in speaking of him.

Never was this temper better exposed, or the evil of it reproved, than in the case of which I am now going to speak; I mean on the occasion of the scribes and pharisees bringing before our Saviour the woman taken in adultery.

We read, that "as Christ was teaching in the temple, they brought to him this woman, and set her in the midst, saying to him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery." Now, since adultery is certainly a most dreadful sin, we might, at first view, be ready to praise these men, and also to say, "What holy and good people must these be! what haters of sin! what friends to God and religion! they, to be sure, must be quite pure and perfect!" Alas! how should we be mistaken if we were to judge thus of them! They were men, no doubt, who had taken some pains to wash the outside clean, and they were in good repute with their neighbours; nevertheless, as this story will shew, they were all the while very wicked in their hearts: they brought this woman before Christ, and placed her in the midst, from a very wrong motive: for they did it not for the sake of glorifying God, not for the sake of punishing sin in this instance, in order to prevent it in others; and not therefore through any love to God, or charity to their neighbour; but, on the contrary, they acted from some of the basest dispositions, for they felt no compassion for the woman, and they wanted only to lay a trap for Christ, in order that they might have matter of accusation against him.

How common is it for people, now-a-days, in some respects, to imitate these scribes and phari-

sees! What curiosity have some men, in the first place, to discover, and then to publish, all the faults and infirmities of their neighbours! Some there are, who spend half their lives in listening to, and repeating, all the scandal that is passing. When they hear of a man that has been overtaken by a sin, or of a woman that has lost her reputation, one would think that they had heard of one of the best pieces of news that ever reached their ears; for how does conversation run on, and the spirits rise, and the wit abound, when the fall of a fellow-creature is the topic of the company! The scribes and pharisees brought this woman forth, and set her in the midst. Just so, methinks, would the persons I am blaming set every offender whom they accuse in the midst of the company, if they were able, for they shew by their language that they delight to expose every one as much as possible. But why, I repeat it, is all this ill-nature? Are these accusers spotless in their own lives? Are they better even than those whom they accuse?—No; I believe it has often happened, that the very man who has been most forward in condemning another, has been himself guilty of the same fault, and liable to the very same condemnation. It is the most wicked part of the world that is commonly the most severe. Your harsh judges are often the very worst of men.

The words used by the scribes and pharisees, when they brought this woman to Christ, were the following. Said they: "Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned, but what sayest thou?" The design evidently was

to put a difficulty in the way of Christ, and, if possible, to set him and Moses at variance ; for if on the one hand, Christ should say that the woman ought to be released, this would be contradicting Moses, and Christ would then have been called a false prophet : but if, on the other hand, Christ should order her to be stoned, this they might think would diminish something from the mercifulness of his character as a Saviour, and would hurt his credit with the people ; so that, in either case, the scribes and pharisees would be gratified. What a crafty question, therefore, was this ! Let us now see how very prudently our Saviour answered it.

At first he appeared as if he took no notice of what was said to him (for when wicked men bring their accusations against others merely to indulge their own malice, it is often best not to lend an ear to them ;) but our Saviour stooping down, wrote with his finger on the ground. The scribes and pharisees now thought they had puzzled him, and they therefore pressed their question again with great earnestness. Ah ! how little did they know of the true character of Christ, for he understood all their thoughts, through that divine power which belonged to him, and his silence, in fact, was only intended to draw these his enemies on into a difficulty, and to make his own answer the more remarkable. Our Saviour, after some time, raised himself from the ground, and said to them, " He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

What a heart-searching answer was this—and,

at the same time, what an unexpected one! They that had just now been accusers, were hereby accused in their turn. It was as if our Saviour had said, You have brought me a woman taken in adultery, and you seem to have been very eager in doing it, and you pretend that you merely want to know what ought to be done with her; I, however, see into your hearts, and because I know that your motives are corrupt, I shall not answer you in the manner in which you expect: Moses, as you observe, commanded the adulterer to be stoned: be it so; go then, if you please, and stone this woman; but take this hint with you, that it becomes those who are the most forward in blaming others, to be particularly free from blame themselves. Let him, therefore, take the lead in punishing her, who, by being free from fault himself, has the best right to inflict the punishment: "Let him that is without sin among you, cast the first stone at her."—Having thus spoken, Christ returned to his employment of writing on the ground, leaving his reproof to work on the minds of the scribes and pharisees.

And now, behold the mighty force of a few words—"they which heard it being convicted by their own consciences, went out one by one, beginning with the eldest, even unto the least; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst." What, are these godly persons gone? all gone? And is the business on which they came left unfinished? It is even so.—The criminal alone remains, and her accusers are

fled ; nor have they fled without reason, for they had now begun to perceive that there was one ready to accuse them in their turn, and that “ all things were naked and open before him with whom they had to do.”—Oh, if it had pleased our Saviour to bring to light all the hidden circumstances of their lives, and to publish on the spot every secret sin they had committed, how would they have had to blush before all the people !—They thought it prudent, therefore, to make the best of their way out of the Temple, leaving our Saviour either to condemn or acquit the woman as he might think proper.

Reader, whensoever you feel tempted to be severe on any crime or failing of your neighbour, call to mind what passed between our Lord and these pharisees ; they were so busy in bringing to light the sin of another, that they had forgot that they had any sins of their own—they reflected not that they were some of the most unfit men in the world to take up the office of accusers ; nor do they seem to have ever considered what was likely to become of themselves hereafter, when God should call them to judgment.—And this is a common evil : God has given to every man his work : each has an evil heart of his own, which he ought to look to ; each, if not guilty of open crimes, has many a secret sin that he ought to repent of : instead of which every one is bestowing his attention on his neighbour's faults, without giving any heed to his own. We are all naturally apt to entertain a very good opinion of ourselves, but a strict examination of our ways might chance to spoil that

good opinion, and we are therefore very backward in entering upon the task. On the contrary, we are very ready to blame our neighbour, for, in proportion as we blacken his character, we cause our own to appear in a favourable light.

But how very foolish, as well as vain, is all this self-deceit ! We may hide our sins, for a while, both from ourselves and from others also ; just as the Pharisees concealed their true character, till our Saviour sent them this rebuke. Soon, however, a day will come, when all that has been kept secret shall be brought to light ; and even now, let me remark, that the same divine person, who, by a few words, confounded these hypocrites, has his eye upon us ; “ for the Lord knoweth our down-sitting and our uprising, and understandeth our thoughts long before ; he is about our path, and about our bed, and espieth out all our ways ; ” “ from him the darkness cannot hide us, for the darkness is no darkness to him, but the night is as clear as the day.” Before him lies the history of our whole lives, in which is noted every thing that we have ever said, every thing that we have ever done, and every thing also that we have ever thought or imagined in our minds. And now, if the same Jesus should again appear in the temple, and reprove us, as he did the Pharisees, awakening in like manner our consciences, and letting them to condemn us, who is there among us that could abide it ? If he should publish among the crowd of our fellow-creatures stand-

ing around us, all the secret sins of our lives, or should draw them up in the form of an accusation against us, and should require us to stand by, and hear the long indictment read, who is there, I say, who could stay to hear it to the end!—Who is there, who would not be glad to escape from his presence, and leave him again alone in the temple!

Nor let us forget that, although Christ walketh not on earth as he once did, and though he is not present to reprove us with an audible voice, as he did the Pharisees, yet he still speaks to us by our consciences, and also by the still voice of his Holy Spirit, which striveth with us: and great is the power of conscience, when once awakened, and set to work by the power of God's Holy Spirit; for then nothing can withstand it: from the moment when it is truly alarmed, it begins to discover a man to himself, and it will then find him so much employment at home, that he will have little leisure and less inclination to turn accuser of his brethren. Go now into the chamber of him whom sickness and sorrow have brought low, and have filled with a deep sense of sin; see with what readiness he confesses his iniquity, and with what earnestness he prays for pardon; see how entirely he is taken up by the affairs of his own soul, and how he is labouring to make his peace with God. Tell him that some neighbour hath fallen into a dreadful sin, and how, think you, will he be affected by it? Why, he will lament, pity, and pray for the person. But if you should try, after the manner of some profane people, to raise a joke at the

expencc of the unhappy sinner, hoping to divert the sick person with the subject, methinks he would turn from you as from a man not fit for him to talk with, and he would, probably, beg you to go out of the room. To proceed one step farther. Suppose the last day to be now come. Imagine that you see the judge upon the throne, the generations of mankind assembled before him, and the books opened, out of which we are all to be judged: who, in that situation, would have any disposition to revile, or laugh at the sins of his neighbour, or would have any heart to be severe upon him! Who is there whose thoughts would not be employed entirely upon his own case? Who would not be anxious to obtain his own pardon; who, in short would not leave God to deal as he thought fit with others, hoping and praying that they also, if possible, might obtain mercy? To this temper, therefore, it is plain, that sickness may soon bring us, and to this temper, may God grant, that we may all be brought before it is too late, since death and judgment will most assuredly bring us to it at last.

Our Saviour, having thus dispatched the Pharisees, the woman alone remains: she was detained in the temple by the same cause which made the others depart—I mean consciousness of guilt. This kept her fixt to the spot even after her accusers were gone, expecting now to hear her sentence pronounced by Christ; who, at length, raising himself from the ground, on which he had been writing, says to the woman, “Where

are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, no man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, neither do I condemn thee; Go, and sin no more."

Let us not be led by this last speech of Christ, to suppose that he meant either to make light of the sin, or to say any thing against the law of God. No, let us take occasion rather, in this place, to remark how very dreadful a crime adultery is considered by our Creator, since he ordered it in the Old Testament to be punished even with death. This punishment, however, was not to be inflicted, except after regular proof; an accuser and sufficient witnesses must come forward in every such case: the proper judge or magistrate must also hear the cause, and must himself pronounce the sentence. If all these necessary rules had been complied with, Christ would not have thought of stopping the due course of law, for he was not used to meddle with the civil power, nor is there any instance of his shewing forth his mercy by saving a criminal out of the hands of public justice. In the present instance, no kind of trial had been had; on the contrary, the accusers and witnesses were all fled; this woman, therefore, not being accused by those whose office it was to accuse her, was not accused by Christ neither, whose office it certainly was not. On another occasion, when Christ was appealed to by one who seems to have been wronged in his property, he made answer, "Man, who made me a judge and a divider?"

Our Saviour came into the world not to settle

disputes about property, nor to meddle in cases of common criminal justice ; he left all such things as these to be managed by the persons whom the state appointed for the purpose. He came to be a Saviour ; he came to pardon sins committed against God, for which he made atonement by his death ; and in his life time he taught men how to obtain this salvation, namely, by repenting and believing in him, and resolving to "sin no more."

In full agreement with these ends of his coming into the world, he in the present case leaves the law of Moses just as it was, neither condemning nor yet acquitting the woman ; but as the publisher of the gospel of the grace of God, and as the Author of everlasting salvation, he comforts with the hope of pardon, the wretched person whom the malicious Pharisees had brought before him, and he directs her how to escape, not the mere punishment of the law, but the more bitter pains of eternal death. "Go," said he, "and sin no more." It is as if he had said, Be not concerned about the accusation before the magistrate which has been brought against you, for your accusers indeed are gone. —I have put them to flight by a single sentence spoken to their consciences ; and since the Pharisees do not accuse you, neither shall I turn prosecutor. Be concerned, however, about the sin against God which you have committed, and if you would ever hope for mercy at his hands, be sure that you do not return to your iniquity. Go then in peace. Go in hope of pardon and

salvation, for I am come into the world to be your Saviour ; but “ go and sin no more.”

---

A N H Y M N.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thy piercing eye  
Strikes through the shade of night ;  
And our most secret actions lie  
All open to thy fight.

There's not a sin that we commit,  
Nor wicked word we say,  
But in thy dreadful book 'tis writ  
Against the judgment day.

And must the crimes that I have done  
Be read and publish'd there ;  
Be all expos'd before the sun,  
While men and angels hear ?

Lord, at thy foot asham'd I lie,  
Upward I dare not look ;  
Pardon my sins, before I die,  
And blot them from thy book.

And since, if e'er I see thy face,  
Thy mercy bids me live ;  
O, let me learn from this thy grace,  
My neighbour to forgive.

Teach me, whene'er his wrath begins,  
To pity, not to chide ;  
And all his multitude of sins  
With charity to hide.

Teach me, tho' wrong'd a thousand times,  
To make no anger known ;  
And when I hear of others' crimes,  
To think upon my own.

ONESIMUS;  
OF THE  
RUN-AWAY SERVANT CONVERTED.  
A TRUE STORY.



ONESIMUS was a servant (or slave) in the house of one Philemon. This Philemon seems to have been remarkable for being a good Christian; for the apostle Paul very particularly mentions his "love and faith towards the Lord Jesus, and towards all saints." It is plain, then, that Onesimus must have had great advantages by living in the house of such a master; and one would think that he must have been a good

Christian also. No, he was far otherwise. He was quite insensible of his advantages. Although there is said to have been "a church," that is, a collection of worshipping Christians, in Philemon's house, yet Onesimus seems to have been not at all the better for it. He received, no doubt, the instructions, he attended regularly at the family prayers, he also beheld daily the bright example of Philemon, and yet his heart continued to be hardened. I should think it probable that Onesimus was very blind and ignorant respecting religion, and also very careless about it, so that all the spiritual instruction he received would go in at one ear, as the saying is, and go out at the other. In the mean time, temptations of various kinds would probably come upon him, and thus he would advance from bad to worse, for one sin commonly leads on to another, and at length his heart being dreadfully hardened, he would be ready for almost any wickedness. It seems, by St. Paul's account, that he became an unfaithful servant, and actually robbed his master, and that he then ran away (perhaps taking his booty with him) to the great city of Rome, where it would be easy for Onesimus to conceal himself, just as it is easy for a man who has played the villain some where at a distance in this country, to lie hid in London now.

If the present story were to stop here, where then, it might be said, is the use of having all these family prayers and this "church in the house?" Why the very servants you instruct will still cheat you just as much as if they were

not instructed, and it is as well therefore to leave them to go their own way, without trying to make them religious.—I will not stop to reply to this observation here, because as we go on with the story, the answer will be plain enough.

What I have next to remark of Onesimus, is, that when he got to Rome, he went to hear the apostle Paul preach. We are not told the reason of his first attending on the apostle. It is not improbable, however, that some qualm of conscience might put him upon this visit. Methinks I see him, for a few days, or weeks, rioting in vice, spending freely the handful of plunder which he had carried off, and as his pocket grows low, becoming low in spirits also. At length his last shilling is gone. Alas ! he has no Christian master to support him, no friend to pity him—and now having first doubted, possibly, whether to plunge into some new crime, in order to relieve his growing distresses, he be-thinks himself of what he had once so carelessly heard in Philemon's house, and lays within his heart, Well, there can be no comfort, no hope, no chance of deliverance for me now, but from the Gospel.—I think it is also possible that he might have occasionally overheard the name of Paul mentioned while he was waiting at Philemon's table, and when pricked in his conscience at Rome, Paul therefore is the man to whom he would naturally fly for relief.

Let no master then despair of being an instrument of good to his servants, even though for a time he should see no fruit of his labours. I am persuaded there has been many a footman, or

stable-boy, or other servant, both male and female, who has continued thoughtless and profane during the whole time of residence in a religious master's house, and who nevertheless has been struck to the heart afterwards, and has profited materially in the end, by some hint which appeared to have no effect at the time of receiving it.

But we are next to speak of a new scene which presents itself. Onesimus is converted to christianity under Paul's ministry. The sinner is convicted of his sin. Through God's mercy the Run-away is arrested in his mad and wicked course. The poor guilty wretch, of course, confesses to Paul his guilt, and through the infinite grace of God in Christ he obtains pardon, and the hope of eternal life.

Here then is a striking proof of the rich provision of mercy which there is in the Gospel. A run-away slave and a thief may become a partaker of it; God can grant even to the vilest and most miserable sinner repentance unto life; and it is proper, therefore, that all should pray to God for a heart to repent, and that no one should despair.

It is plain from many signs, that the repentance of Onesimus was sincere. In the first place, I think we may take Paul's word that it was so, for Paul would not have spoken so decidedly as he did, if he had not first enquired into the case. No; I will warrant you, Paul examined Onesimus very closely; for Paul's charity did not consist in believing in a good-natured way, that every one was a christian who said that he was so; on the

contrary, Paul's charity led him to be careful and jealous, lest he should comfort his flock with a false hope, or should flatter the person of any one. It made him, therefore, exceedingly particular in examining the state of men's souls; and hence it comes to pass, that the words of Paul have so much weight whenever he pronounces any one to be a Christian.

But the sincerity of Onesimus's repentance is still further proved by a circumstance which is distinctly mentioned; I mean by his readiness to take Paul's advice when he bids him go back again to his injured master. Now a false penitent would differ from Onesimus in this particular. A false penitent would make a thousand objections to such a measure. What, he would say, must I go back to my master whom I have wronged? I dare not show my face before him, nor before my fellow-servants. I shall sink into the earth when I see them. Besides, where is the necessity for returning? I am willing to repent, indeed, but may I not repent at Rome? Surely, I may be allowed to remain here in my present obscurity, for the disgrace of seeing my master, and all my old friends again, is more than I can bear, but I will bear any thing else; I will live hard and work honestly, and I will be very sorry for my sin, and I will continue to attend Paul's preaching; surely this will suffice. But go back again in the first place to your master, says Paul. Go and own to him what you have done; away with all this pride and evil shame which is about you. Submit to the disgrace you have brought on yourself, and try to repair the

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evil you have done as well as you can, by working hard for Philemon in the time to come; endeavour to earn *for* him as much money as you have stolen *from* him, and be not afraid of Philemon's wrath, for I will give you a letter to him. This is the proof I require of your sincerity.

How wise and judicious was this advice of Paul to Onesimus! "Whom," says he in the letter, "I have sent again;" that is, whom I have sent back again, in order that he may confess his whole fault to you, and return into your service. The confession of the sin against Philemon was better in this case than any general confession of faith, or than any plausible tale of Onesimus's conversion; and so it may be observed in other cases, that a readiness to go back at all hazards, and to acknowledge our crime to the person we have offended, and to repair it as well as we are able, is the first proof of sincerity that should be required; whereas an unwillingness to return, implies much remaining pride of heart, a very sinful sort of shame; a disregard to strict honesty, and a fear of consequences that is inconsistent with that faith and trust in God, which accompany true repentance.

Onesimus, as I have said, consented to return; and let us not suppose that he is now to be pitied on that account, or that any great miseries were in consequence about to fall upon his head. No, let us congratulate him rather on his right resolution, for I will warrant you, that after the first affecting scene was over, he would be much the happier for it; and let us remember also, that

we are to consider him now as a Christian, who has got among Christian people, and that he departs, bearing in his hand that letter of St. Paul to Philemon, which I have spoken of, and which forms one of the short Books or Epistles of the New Testament. How kind, how affectionate, how condescending does every part of this epistle appear when it is carefully examined ! It is a specimen of the Christian spirit, and we shall therefore now turn from Onesimus's character to the contemplation of that of Paul, which we have here a fine opportunity of considering.

Paul was now grown extremely old, and he had suffered much in the cause of the gospel. He was at this very time a prisoner, and it was, while in prison and in bonds, that he had preached so effectually to Onesimus. It is likewise remarkable that not only Onesimus the slave, but that Philemon the master also, to whom the letter was addressed, had been converted through Paul's ministry. Thus, therefore, this venerable saint was able to write with the authority that belonged to him, both as an apostle, as an old man, and as Philemon's father in Christ, as the father in like manner of Onesimus, and as a chief sufferer, who was soon also to prove a noble martyr in the cause of their common Saviour.

What then is the ground which he may be supposed to take, in order to persuade Philemon to spare the poor converted slave that is sent back to him ? The ground he takes is this : He forbears, he says, from that exercise of his authority which such a one as he might use ; he hints, in a most affecting manner, how Philemon himself

had owed the life of his very soul to the apostle; and he then intreats Philemon, for love's sake, to comply with the earnest request that is made to him, briefly intimating also the worldly profit which Philemon would derive from having now a Christian servant instead of an unbelieving one. But let us quote the apostle's own words: "Wherefore," says he, "though I might be bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love's sake, I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ; I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds, which in times past was to thee unprofitable, but is now profitable to thee and to me, whom I have sent again, thou therefore receive him that is mine own bowels." And then he adds, "Thou therefore receive him, not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, especially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord."

What an astonishing difference does Christianity make in men! What a kind spirit do we here trace! How strange also must all this love and condescension seem to some people! A man of the world, whose servant had robbed him and ran away, would never believe Christianity could convert the man, and would disdain to receive such a kind of letter as I have described. I am persuaded also, my readers will agree, that a worldly correspondent, though naturally ever so humane, would be very far from writing such a kind of letter as this; and certainly an unrepenting and worldly-minded slave would ill deserve to

have it written. But how affectionately does the apostle still proceed: "If," says Paul, "thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account. I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it. Albeit, I do not say to thee how thou owest to me thine own self besides."

And now let it be remarked, what a happy influence had Christianity on the whole condition of this poor wretched run-away. He was sinking, no doubt, into the lowest infamy as well as poverty and woe, when he first waited on Paul; he was living, I dare say, among the dregs of the people at Rome; and if he had remained unconverted, if either he had not gone to Paul, or if having gone to him, he had again hardened his heart, and returned to his former wickedness, he would probably have ended his days on the crucifix or gibbet, or at least, he would have soon perished through want, unknown and unregarded, for he would have been swept away among the thousands, whom the vice and wickedness of every great city are continually sending to an untimely grave: A guilty conscience also would have haunted him in his last hours, and after death, he must have stood before an offended God, and at last, he must have had his portion in that place, where "there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

How happy then, I say, how transporting was the change! The pride of his heart being first subdued, through that blessed gospel which was made known to him, he returns to his master.

This was a great step. He returns to slavery, indeed, but to a slavery, no doubt, that was extremely mild, and that scarcely deserved the name; for he is immediately received, even as a brother, into the family from whence he had fled as a culprit; and the same Epistle of Paul, which introduced him to Philemon, would now recommend him, no doubt, to many members of the church at Colossus, with whom he would become united in the bonds of Christian love. Nay, if we believe the report of history, his good conduct as a slave, soon afterwards gained him his liberty, and he even rose, as some have supposed, (though of this there may be a certain degree of doubt) to the situation of a minister or teacher in the infant Christian church.

But whatever his condition may have been, during the remainder of his days on earth, (and it is indeed, comparatively, of little moment) of this at least we are sure, that his everlasting happiness was secured, and that he is now numbered among the company of those "who have washed their garments, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" whose offences in this life are pardoned through the merits of Christ, and who are "standing before the throne of God." There the great apostle Paul, and his excellent friend, Philemon, and there also, the converted slave, Onesimus, unite with one voice in that triumphant song, (God grant, that each of us may one day join in it) "Unto Him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests

unto God and his Father, unto Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

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*An APPLICATION of the above STORY to the Case of those unhappy Men and Women, who, like Onesimus, have left their Home, and have got into a bad Way of Life.*

THE story which we have related, may be useful to persons of every class, but there is a very particular application of it, which may be made to those who, in some measure, resemble the run-away and unconverted Onesimus.

I mean now, therefore, to address myself to those who, through some false step in life, and perhaps by adding one piece of misconduct to another, have fallen into any very distressful and disgraceful circumstances. I address myself more especially to those unhappy women, who, like Onesimus, have run away from their proper home, where once, perhaps, they may have heard something of the gospel, though they did not attend to it, and who are now ruined in their character; who are also plunged by their growing necessity into a life of open and allowed sin, and are perishing both as to body and soul, either in our great towns, or among the dregs of the people of our metropolis.

I would entreat such persons to consider a little the case of this poor Onesimus, at the time he was plunged, as I have supposed him to have been, in the debaucheries of Rome, and when

he must be viewed as a run-away, and even a thief and a vagabond. Methinks he resembled, in a few leading particulars, what some of you may be at present. Now it happened that Onesimus went one day to hear Paul preach. What if you were, for once in your lives, to do the same? I mean, what if you were to go and hear the preaching of some faithful and zealous minister of Christ, some follower of Paul the apostle? I would advise you, if you think of doing it at all, to go on the very next sabbath. Onesimus, by hearing Paul preach, was delivered out of all his troubles, for he was effectually converted to Christianity; and who knows whether, if you pursue the same means, it may not please God to save you, both body and soul, in the same manner? Indeed, I can hardly imagine any other way than that which Onesimus actually took, by which he could have been recovered; and, depend upon it, if ever you escape, and are restored to peace, to happiness, and to society, it must be by the same mighty power of the Gospel. Would to God, that some unhappy creature, who reads this tale, and who has imitated Onesimus in his wanderings, might imitate him also in his repentance! Would to God, that some lost sheep might thus be brought back into the fold of Christ! Would to God, that some prodigal son, for instance, might be persuaded, like the prodigal in the gospel, to repent and return to his father's house; or that some woman, who is a sinner, while she is reading this tale, might find her eyes begin to stream with tears, like the Magdalen,

who wept so plentifully at the feet of our Saviour, and might, like her, attain to a comfortable and well-grounded hope, that "her sins, which are many," are forgiven her!

But what can we do? methinks I hear a whole multitude of such persons reply; we long to be restored to all the comforts you speak of; we are charmed at the very mention of such happiness, but we know not how to get possession of it.—I answer, do then, in all respects, like Onesimus. Take example, as far as your case will allow, from all the various circumstances which may be supposed to have belonged to his tale. First of all, he attended Paul's preaching; after which, I suppose, he called on the apostle and told him his story. The apostle, indeed, was a poor man himself, and a prisoner also; so that a little good advice, (which, however, is a very valuable thing) was all that could be got from him; except, indeed, that Paul, being acquainted with a number of good Christians, among whom there might be some rich ones also, he was able to give Onesimus a letter of introduction, if he thought proper. The same thing, perhaps, may happen now. If you will call on some minister of the gospel, after having for a while attended his preaching, provided he judges you to be truly penitent, he will be induced, perhaps, if poor himself, to give you a recommendation to some Christian friend of his, to some capital house-keeper, like Philemon.

But, shall I tell you what will be his difficulty? A suspicion will immediately arise about your sincerity, and the removal of this suspicion is the

great thing which you must aim at. Onesimus succeeded in removing this suspicion from the mind of Paul; for, if he had not, I am sure Paul would never have written such a letter as he did to Philemon.

Let me, then, close with a little advice as to this point, I mean, as to the manner in which you must give proof of your sincerity.

First, when you confess your faults to any one of whom you ask help, do not confess them by halves. I have known some persons acknowledge a few things which they have done wrong, and which, indeed, they could not hide, while they have been mightily reserved upon other points. They have left out half their story. They have thought, perhaps, to spare themselves hereby, but, in fact, it has commonly proved, that what was concealed was afterwards discovered, and they have been rejected, not at all on account of any unwillingness to help them, though hitherto ever so wicked, but on account of it's continuing still to be impossible to put any trust in them. Onesimus, I warrant you, confessed his whole sin to Paul, and was not detected afterwards in any little reservations or excuses, or false colourings.

Again, draw nearer and nearer to religion. Read the Scriptures; avoid bad company; attend diligently on the preaching of the gospel; and endeavour to make acquaintance with those who attend also, and who, however poor, are religious. Onesimus had become one among the little society of the "saints which were at Rome,"

at the time when Paul wrote so confidently of his sincerity.

Again, put away your pride and false shame; very forlorn and wicked people are often very proud, and this pride works in a thousand ways, so 'as to hinder their deliverance. Onesimus submitted to go back to his old master, notwithstanding all the shame that attended his return; and you must show something of the same temper, if you expect any one who understands the human heart, so as all Christians do, to put confidence in your sincerity.

Again, put your trust in God; dare to fulfil your present duty; and do not reason too much about consequences: God has all events, and he has likewise all hearts, in his hand; and he can and will make a way for your escape, as he did for that of Onesimus, if you resolve fully to serve him, and put your trust in him.

Again, determine on a life of industry, for all idleness in you must be dishonesty. Onesimus went and worked, even as a slave. I hope you have no objection to go and work any where as a servant, and to accept even the lowest service. I hope, too, you desire to be a very diligent and profitable servant. "Onesimus," as St. Paul observes, "had been once unprofitable, but was now profitable." He became a most valuable, hard-working man when he became a Christian.

But, above all things, take care to be what you wish to appear; take care, I mean, to be a most sincere and true penitent. It is a small matter to seem sincere in the sight of your fellow-creatures, when you are not so in the sight of God.

The heart is deceitful. Enter, therefore, deeply into this matter; consider your own weakness in times past; fly from temptation; be often on your knees also, confessing your sins, and praying to God to strengthen you by his Holy Spirit; pray to him, in short, "to search and to try you, to prove you, and examine your ways, to look well if there be any way of wickedness in you, and to lead you in the way everlasting."

And now, are you still out of spirits and desponding? Do you still think there is no friend to pity you, no help near you, and that no minister, if you should go to him, will take notice of your case? I will add another hint on this subject. When Onesimus first went to Paul, I dare say he little expected to get such a kind letter as he obtained. Shall I then explain to you what was the cause which made Paul condescend so readily to this poor repenting sinner? It was this: Paul was once a great sinner himself; he could remember a time, when (though he never was a thief or a run-away) yet he was a hinderer of the gospel, and even a persecutor also. But Paul had obtained mercy. And now it became the happiness of his life to tell of the grace of Jesus Christ. "Unto me," said he, "who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." He thought it the greatest honour in the world, to be allowed to publish, among the vilest Gentiles, the salvation of the blessed Jesus. So is it also now. The very best men on earth, whether Christian ministers or Christian people,

like Paul, owe all to mercy, and they long therefore to commend you to the same mercy, and to stretch out their hand to your relief.

Learn, then, to understand the true hindrance to your recovery. It is not that there are no Christians who will help you. It is not that there are no means of deliverance for you, for we have shewn you that "if there is a will there is a way." It is not that you are driven into sin by any irresistible fate, for God is above fate, and God drives no man into sin. It is, in short, your own fault, and your own fault alone. Escape, then, immediately; give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, till you have taken some step towards your recovery. Remember, in short, that if Onesimus escaped, so may you; and that if you use not the same means, this very story of Onesimus will one day rise up in judgment against you.

DEATH OF CHRIST;  
OR,  
TRACT FOR GOOD-FRIDAY.

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THERE is no part of our religion which is better known than the great and important fact, that Jesus Christ our Saviour died on the cross for us; and yet it is often known to little or no purpose. We all have heard also, more or less, of the various circumstances attending his death; how he was agonizing in the garden a little before that dreadful event, saying, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not my will but thine be done;" and how his disciples, during this agony of their Master, were unable, through weariness, to keep their eyes open, and three times following fell asleep. You, probably, also remember very well, that he was betrayed soon after by one of these his own disciples, and betrayed even by a kiss. Many affecting circumstances attended his being led out to execution. The common people, who before had admired his miracles, and had welcomed him as he rode meekly into Jerusalem upon an ass, crying out, "Hosannah to the Son of David! Hosannah in the highest!" now turned against

him—The chief priests, in whose hands were the Old Testament Scriptures, those true oracles of God, which foretold of this Jesus Christ, and who ought therefore to have been the first to do him honour, and to welcome his coming—even the chief priests, I say, became his enemies, nay his chief enemies; for it was they who secretly stirred up the people, having taken counsel among themselves how they might put him to death. Pontius Pilate also, the chief magistrate, who was bound by his office to do justice, and who was appointed to be a judge for this very end; even he, while he confessed that he saw no fault in him, consented to give him up. The soldiers insulted him, thinking, no doubt, to obtain praise from their superiors for every affront which they could offer to this despised Christ. They mocked him, and dressed him up in a purple robe, and they put on him a crown of thorns, and they spit on him, and they smote him with the palms of their hands, and said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” And finally, all these his enemies being agreed together, “they took Jesus and led him away—and he, bearing his cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.”

Then the soldiers took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part: and also his coat which was without a seam. They said therefore among themselves, let us not rend it, but cast lots for it; that the Old Testament Scripture

might be fulfilled, which saith, " They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture did they cast lots." And they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall; and when he had tasted thereof he would not drink. And sitting down they watched him there; and they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads and saying, " Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." Likewise also the chief priests, mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, " He saved others, himself he cannot save." The thieves also which were crucified with him cast the same in his teeth. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land, unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, " My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me!" And straightway one of them that stood by took a sponge and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, " Truly this was the Son of God."

Such is the story of the death of Christ—a most wonderful and affecting story. But what are the uses to be made of it?

Now, in the first place, I will guard my readers against some common errors on this subject; and then I will describe what it is to be properly affected by the Death of Christ.

First, then, I would warn you, that it is not enough simply to believe that Jesus Christ really died, as the Scriptures here describe, and was no impostor. There is indeed a knowledge of this truth, which, as I shall presently shew, is of high importance; but there is also a certain careless and unfeeling knowledge of it, which, perhaps, only encreases our guilt and condemnation. God forbid (say some) that I should be so wicked as not to believe that Jesus Christ died for me. God forbid that I should take part against him while I read his story; and that I should be like Judas, or Pontius Pilate, or the chief priests, or the soldiers, or any of the multitude who cried out, “Crucify, crucify him!” You believe that they crucified him wickedly, and were guilty of his blood, and you would not for the world have had the stain of that blood upon you.

But stop my friend—are you sure that you do not resemble, in some respects, these very people? The great sin of the multitude, nay, and of many princes, and chief persons in those days, was their thoughtlessness and ignorance concerning Jesus Christ, for “*bad they known it*, (as the Scriptures tell us) they would not have crucified

the Lord of Glory." Most of those who joined in the cry against Christ, seem to me to have been your irreligious, ignorant, and unthinking sort of people, who trouble themselves very little with thinking who is good and who is wicked. They were ready therefore to follow any blind guide, and to commit almost any wickedness without knowing what they were doing.

Now if you are a thoughtless, ignorant person, who have never considered at all what is true goodness, and what is true religion: if you are one of those who take up your religion merely on trust, and who have hitherto taken part with Christ only because you happen to have lived among people who are on that side, you exceedingly deceive yourself, if you fancy you are a real believer. Suppose now that you were in France, where many talk against Christ, and bring forward plausible and well-sounding arguments against Christianity—Or suppose you were to go and live a few months in England among people (and some such there are in this country) who are always talking against Christianity; I fear such faith as yours would presently give way, and you, who now suppose yourself a Christian, would turn against that Saviour about whom you have hitherto troubled yourself so little; just like that mob of unthinking people, who at one time cried out, "Hosannah to the Son of David!" but presently afterwards turned round and said, "Crucify, crucify him!" Take care then, in the first place, that your's is not that idle, thoughtless way of believing in Christ, which is, in fact, no believing at all; which lasts no longer than

while Christianity is fashionable among those around us.

But beware also of another way of believing in the death of Christ, which is of almost as little use or avail. I mean, beware lest your thoughts concerning him are merely general, and have no application to yourselves, so as to influence your own practice. Christ, say some, is the Saviour of the world—they also call him commonly “our Saviour;” they trust, in a general way, that through him they shall be saved: But here lies the great mischief—they have not applied this matter to themselves. He is *our* Saviour, they are apt to say; but He is *my* Saviour is a language which they have not yet attained to.—They are satisfied with the general truth, for they have never felt uneasy and cast down on account of their sins, and therefore they have never needed to be comforted and raised up. Neither have they felt the want of some new and powerful motive to obedience, such as the true knowledge of the death of Christ supplies; they are, therefore, almost as cold and indifferent, though they know the general truth, as the more ignorant persons I first spoke of. But the meaning of this rebuke will be rendered still more plain, by proceeding next to shew what it is to be properly affected by the death of Christ.

First then, before we can be rightly affected, there must be some right foundation of knowledge. Some persons, perhaps, have been to church many hundred times in their lives, and still they know little or nothing even of Jesus

Chriſt, the great ſubject of all preaching. Aſk yourſelves, then, who was Chriſt? He is called in Scripture the Son of God; he was not a mere man like us, but he came down from heaven, and he went back to heaven again. He was with God the Father in the beginning, for the Scripture ſaith, “the word (that is, Chriſt) was with God, and the word was God; and the word was made fleſh, and he dwelt among us.” Now if we know that Chriſt is thus great, and thus divine, we ſhall know alſo, that there is good reaſon for truſting in him. If a common man were to promiſe you ſomething great, perhaps you would not truſt his promiſe, becauſe you might ſuſpect, that he had promiſed more than ſuch a one as he could perform; but if a king’s ſon were to promiſe you the ſame thing, you would put confidence in him, becauſe he was a king’s ſon; and though the thing were ever ſo great, you would have no doubt at all on the matter. Now Chriſt is the Son of God; he is, therefore, great and worthy to be truſted in, with reſpect to all thoſe things in which he claims our truſt. He is qualified to fulfil all the ends for which he came into the world, and to accompliſh the great work of our ſalvation. But how does he accompliſh it? I anſwer, chiefly by dying for us. This is, therefore, the point on which I mean here principally to dwell. By his death he made ſatisfaction (or atonement) to God for our ſins. Man is a ſinner: we are all ſinners. We ought to obey God every day, and every hour of every day. We ought to do nothing but what God commands, and to do every thing we do, becauſe God commands it. Not a thought

ought to be indulged which God does not approve, not a single wish or affection of the heart. It is astonishing how strict the Scripture is in describing our duty; it says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." But do you thus love God, and thus love your neighbour also? Is this great and good Being habitually in your thoughts; and are you continually saying to yourself, "how shall I please him?" Are you, for the Lord's sake, earnest also to serve every one of your fellow-creatures, and careful not to prefer yourself before them? And is it always thus with you? Do these good intentions and aims never flag within you? Look back now to your conduct this morning.—Did you cast off sloth betimes, as you ought? Did you betake yourself to prayer, as you ought, with earnestness, with warm affections towards God, with reverence, with deep humility, with becoming devotion? Did you read his word as you had opportunity? Did you pursue whatever was the most proper duty of the next hour with alacrity, and in a perfectly right frame of spirit? Has no impatient thought risen up this day, no evil desire? Has no angry word proceeded out of your lips? Now if, in examining your conduct for a single morning, you find much sin may be traced in you, what then must have been the sin of your whole lives! O think on this subject, and apply it to your own hearts. Think, I mean, of those offences against God, which in childhood, in youth, and in riper age, you have committed. Think also of all the good which you might have done, and have

neglected to do. Perhaps many a false step in life has been deliberately taken by you, and many a gross and dreadful sin committed, besides all your other innumerable offences; and if you do not see much sin to have been in you, it is only because your ignorance has hidden from you your guilt; because your conscience is blinded, and your whole life has been one constant course of forgetfulness of God, and neglect of his will and commandments.

And how, therefore, I say, are all these sins to be pardoned? Will your future obedience serve as a plea before God? Alas, you cannot expect to do in future any thing more than your whole future duty, even if you can be supposed to do that;—the future therefore shall not be able at the utmost to atone for more than itself. Will you then say, that your sins are small, and shall be forgiven on account of their smallness? But are they not sins against the great God, and does not your conscience witness, in consequence of what has been already said, that they are both many and great? Will you then plead, that they were committed through ignorance and thoughtlessness? I answer, that this very thoughtlessness was a sin. Or will you plead, in short, that your sins do not, in themselves, deserve punishment? I answer, that at this rate, you may as well say, that no sin deserves punishment; for if one sin, why not another? and how then is God's government, or indeed any government, to be maintained, if sin and innocence are to be all alike, and if the guilty are not to be liable to any punishment for their guilt?

Now this is a plain and practical way in which every one, as I think, may learn to understand the great end of Christ's coming into this world. He came "to die for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."—"He came to seek and to save them that were lost, (for without him we are all lost) and to give his life a ransom for us."—"Behold then the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world!"—"For he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." That Jesus, whom wicked men crucified between two thieves, "one on either side, and Jesus in the midst:" that Jesus, who hung on the cross as a criminal, "was wounded for our sins, and bruised for our iniquities."—"He bare our sins in his own body, on the tree;" our sins are imputed to him, and his righteousness is imputed to us, if we are of the number of those who confess their sins, and who with a hearty repentance, and true faith, turn unto him.

While, therefore, we read the melancholy tale of the death of Christ, we must not forget what a part we had in it. It is not the soldiers only that pierced the side of Christ, it is not the Jews only that crucified him, it was not Judas, or Pontius Pilate, or Caiaphas, or the chief priests only, that did this deed;—it is our sins that have crucified him. We should "look on him whom *we* have pierced." God would have interposed in order to deliver his own Son from the base and wicked treatment which he was exposed to from his enemies, if there had not been a grand design

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to be accomplished by it, namely, your salvation and mine. While we weep over a suffering Saviour, let us then weep over those sins of our own which caused him to suffer. And while we blame Pilate, and Herod, and Judas, and all the rest of the wicked tribe, let our blame be chiefly directed against ourselves, whose guilt has made this costly sacrifice necessary, and for whose sake Christ was contented to die, was contented to bear his cross to Golgotha, and then to be crucified upon it. This then is the way to be *properly* affected by the story of the death of Christ.

But further, we should be affected also with a sense of gratitude, for the benefits derived from Christ's death. It is not sorrow, or contrition only, that we ought to feel, on reading Christ's death; we ought also to feel thankfulness and joy for our deliverance. Christ has suffered, that we might go free. What thanks and praise are due, both to God the Father, "who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all;" and to Christ himself, for the willingness with which he became "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" for the willingness with which he bore his agony in the garden, and then carried his cross, and then had his body nailed to the accursed tree; for the willingness, I say, with which he endured all, until the hour came, when having received the vinegar, he cried out, and said, "It is finished!"

Gratitude is, therefore, most clearly due to Christ for this mercy; and in the idea of this gratitude, I mean to include a thankful and willing

obedience. What, is no return due to him for these sufferings, which, I have shewn, were all on our account? Or if you admit, that we should give him praise, will you say, that this praise should be with our lips only? No, surely, it should be with our lives. We should do from the heart whatever he commands us. When the apostle Paul thought of Christ dying for him, he was led to say, that "they which live through Christ, should now no longer live to themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again." Do you then live to yourself, or with a view to Christ's service? Ask yourself that question. What do you chiefly aim at in life? to please your own humour, to advance yourself and your family in the world, to be comfortable as long as you are in it, and to pass through it with reputation, honour, and prosperity; having plenty of all the good things of this life, and caring much for yourself, and little for other people? Or have you really learnt by the study of the death of Christ to live as Paul did, no longer to yourself, but to him who died for you? The story of your Saviour's death, rightly understood, should make you come to such a determination as the following:—"O merciful Saviour, (it should teach you to say) thou hast not spared to give up thy life a sacrifice for my sin, that so (notwithstanding all my offences against God, which might have brought down just punishment upon me) I might be entirely delivered from my guilt, and be made heir of everlasting glory. I bless thee for this astonishing act of thy mercy, and my life shall now be dedicated unto thee. My heart is

filled with gratitude unto thee, who hast even died for me, and this gratitude shall teach me obedience. I will spend my days on earth in doing thy will. Much hast thou sacrificed for me, what then shall be my return? I will surrender to thee my time, my talents, my all. I will deny myself, I will renounce all selfish plans of living, I will also mortify my body, I will resist my pride, my vanity, and all my various sins; I will now be thy servant, for thou hast bought me by thy blood, and I will think no service hard, and no sacrifice great for thy sake."

But, lastly, I would observe, that they only are rightly affected by the death of Christ, who continue to be rightly affected by it. It is not enough to feel, while you read this story, some such emotions as I have described: you must think often of this Saviour, who has this day been set forth as crucified before you. You must think of him not on this day but to-morrow also, nor to-morrow only, but all the days of your life; not occasionally, in short, but habitually. The common motive of a true believer's actions, is a regard to him who died for him. The thought of his Saviour's crucifixion recurs to him in all the various periods of life; and, I may add more particularly, that it recurs to him in every hour of trial, in every season of temptation, of provocation, of hardship, and of disgrace. Are you dejected? What is your dejection to that of Christ! Are you in pain? What is your pain to his pain, and your sorrow, to the sorrow of his soul! Are you contradicted, reviled, and despised? Behold your Saviour wearing a crown of thorns, dressed in a

purple robe, mocked, insulted, and spit upon, and then crucified between two thieves, having Barabbas, a murderer, preferred before him ! Again, do you meet with unkind usage in return for all your kindness and benevolence to others ? Does nobody thank you, though you try to do every body good ? Do they hate you even, and revile you, though you lay out your whole life in endeavouring to serve them ? Behold your Saviour laying down his life for his enemies ; and when he was reviled, not reviling again ! “ Father,” says he, “ forgive them !” forgive these my murderers, for whom I am now dying ! “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do !” O what a spirit of persevering kindness does the right knowledge of Christ’s death teach us ! In short, is there any grievance in our case ? Our very grievances may remind us of Christ crucified ; since that cup of bitterness of which we merely taste, he drank up even to the dregs, for the whole wrath of God fell upon his head, and, therefore, our Saviour’s death is at once a motive to all cheerful obedience, and a cure for all our complaints. May we then use the doctrine for this purpose, and thus may we shew, that we have a true faith in Jesus Christ our Lord.

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# SOME NEW THOUGHTS

FOR THE

## NEW YEAR.

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WHEN Mr. Thrifty (who keeps that great mercer's shop in London, which has been getting on so famously of late) was once asked to dine two days after Christmas by his neighbour Careless (who I have heard by-the-bye has been made bankrupt); Thrifty answered, that it was quite impossible to dine out then, for that he was settling his Christmas accounts, which, added he, must not be neglected for the world, for I should never know where I was; I should not understand whether I was going forward or backward, getting rich, or growing ever so poor, if I was to neglect casting up, and balancing, and examining into every thing at Christmas.—Why, to be sure, answered Careless, you have a large business, Mr. Thrifty, and a large business must be looked after.—'Tis by my looking after it that it has become so large, returned Thrifty with a look of great shrewdness, and if I were not to look after it still, it would soon grow little again, I warrant you.

I am persuaded that my readers and I shall one and all of us allow, that this was a very right observation of Mr. Thrifty's, and yet I doubt whether we shall equally agree in the following re-

mark, though it has nearly the same foundation; namely, that if we hope to be saved from ruin in the next world, and to succeed in our everlasting interests, it is necessary that we should use the very same kind of diligence in examining the state of our souls, which Mr. Thrifty used in examining the state of his worldly business.

There is also a manner of deceiving ourselves in our religious concerns, which is very like that in which they who fail in business are apt to be deceived. No man means entirely and at all times to neglect his soul; no, he merely puts off his self-examination, or he is idle and slovenly about it. Mr. Careless used always to be of opinion, that a regular yearly balancing of his books was not necessary. He thought he could form a pretty fair general guess at the state of his affairs, without taking all the trouble that Mr. Thrifty took in going particularly into them. It proved, however, when Mr. Careless broke, that the few goods he had to shew had been most strangely over-valued, and, on the other hand, that the debts he owed amounted to about five times the sum he expected. Now, I am persuaded, that those of my readers who never examine their hearts, will, on the day of judgment, find themselves as much mistaken in respect to the worth of their supposed virtues, as well as the number of their sins (which are like so many debts due to God), as ever Mr. Careless was; and the only way of recovering from their danger, will be to do immediately what the friends of Mr. Careless advised him to do the Christmas before he broke—I mean to look their

affairs fully in the face, to take instant measures for getting at a true and just estimate of them, and then to adopt some wise and prudent plan for their effectual relief.

I will add one other observation. This Mr. Careless, as I have heard, did not break through any violent misconduct: he never was guilty of any scandalous and immediately ruinous transaction, like some others, but then he was inattentive to his business, and by this mere inattention he was year after year dropping down, without being aware of it, into sure and certain ruin: he never could be persuaded to look carefully into his affairs, which was owing at first to idleness, and latterly to this additional cause, that a certain kind of fearfulness and false shame had got about him, inasmuch, that when some friends of his, who perceived his ignorance of book-keeping, offered on the Christmas before he broke, to lend him some assistance, he absolutely declined it, which was considered always as one of the most unpardonable parts of his whole conduct.

I propose now, after the example of these friends of Mr. Careless, to hold out to my readers some assistance in entering into that self-examination which I am here pressing upon them, and if they think proper to neglect the help that is offered them, I can only say, that I think they really so much resemble Mr. Careless, that they ought to come forward and take his part, and to defend his character from those severe censures, which I am told that his neglect of a like offer has every where brought upon him.

But let me first add a few more words to prove that the kind of comparison which I have spoken of is really a just one; for many people seem by no means to be convinced, that a man may be ruined in his soul by mere neglect, in the same manner as he may in his trading business. I will venture to observe on this head, that neglect is apt to bring on ruin not in a mercer's shop only, but even in every thing. Name me now, if you can, any trade or profession in life which can thrive without diligence. Has not God so made the world as to shew that man must be diligent, and that it is at his peril to be neglectful? There is no business that will do itself; moreover, if a man be ever so diligent in one thing, but quite neglectful of another, he is sure to feel the consequence even of this partial carelessness. If a farmer was to look well to his labourers in the field, but not to mind his marketing, or if trader Thrifty was to be always bringing up his books in the counting-house, but was never to go forward into the shop and wait upon his customers, do you think he would not suffer by it? So if a man minds this world only, and never thinks of the next, the business of the next world will certainly not be done, as he will find hereafter to his cost. Some men, if any one should inquire into the state of their souls, and should ask "for a reason of the hope that is in them," would merely answer in general, that God is merciful, and that Christ died for them, and add the like general reasons, which any man in Christendom may give as well as they; and if you were to press them further they could only say, I know not

much about the matter, I hope well, I trust God with my soul: I shall fare as well as other men do: I thank God I never made any doubt of my salvation. Now what do all such kind of sayings discover, but a wilful neglect of their salvation? It is as if a ship-master should let his vessel alone and say, I will venture it among the rocks, and waves, and winds: I will trust God with it: It will fare as well as other vessels. I say what horrible abuse of God's mercy is this! He commands us to give diligence to make our calling and election sure, and in this way of diligence to trust him.

It may be further added, that in general we find in all our affairs of this life, that whatever is most important requires the highest degree of care and diligence: ought we not, therefore, to fear lest negligence should prove the most fatal of all in the concerns of the immortal soul, which are certainly the greatest of our concerns? What care is necessary to keep alive our body! it must be daily fed, and clothed, and cherished, and provided for in a vast variety of ways; and it is not necessary to lay violent hands upon it in order to destroy it. If due care be not taken of it, it perishes of course. So is it with a man's soul; it is certainly perishing if it's interests are neglected and forgotten by him, and it may be as effectually destroyed without any great sin, as the body may without any great blow.

Once more I beg leave to add, that it is no proof our souls are safe, that we feel at present no harm or inconvenience from our neglect of them.

Mr. Careless felt no inconvenience from *his* neglect at the time when he asked Thrifty to dinner. His bankruptcy came upon him quite like a thunder-clap: his things, indeed, were in confusion before, but the same idleness which kept him from examining them, kept him from knowing beforehand the misery that awaited him. I apprehend, therefore, that the cheerfulness, of which some thoughtless and irreligious people make their boast, is no proof of their safety, but is merely like the gaiety of Mr. Careless on the day when he was making merry with his company, instead of casting up his books, and minding the main chance, as it is called.

But I must observe further, that there is one great error which a vast number of people fall into, and by which they are apt to be made very easy under the most complete neglect of their souls. The mistake I mean is the following one: they are diligent, as they call it, at their duty: thus, for instance, they dig hard, if digging is their business; they write, and cast accounts, and keep shop diligently, if they are clerks or shopkeepers, or they do their exercise briskly, and follow orders readily, if they are soldiers or sailors, and, having done this their daily work, they think they have done all that can be required of them. Religion they possibly allow to be a good thing, but this, say they, is religion: nay, to do their work well is the best sort of religion: and they desire to know no other. Let us now combat this error, which has a very fair appearance, and which has also some mixture of truth with it.

Presuming my readers to believe the Bible, I will here, in the first place, quote Scripture on the subject. If to labour merely in our calling is one and the same thing as to labour for our souls, how comes our Saviour to have used, for instance, such expressions as the following? "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat which endureth to everlasting life." I grant our Saviour does not hereby mean, that we ought not in any sense to labour for "the meat that perisheth," but he certainly must mean, that we ought not to labour for this only, nor even for this chiefly; he must also mean, that there is a duty called by him "labouring for everlasting life," which is a distinct thing from labouring to support our bodies; for if these two things were not distinct, he would not have mentioned them so distinctly. Again, our Saviour speaks of a man who had been "filling his garners, and laying up goods for many years," who evidently, therefore, was a very diligent man in his business, and yet this is the very man who is pointed out as one whose soul had been neglected: for it is said, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." I will add another remarkable saying of our Saviour on the same subject. He describes the general invitation to attend to the gospel, by comparing it to a "marriage supper," to which, said he, when men were asked to come, "they all with one consent began to make excuse, for one went to his farm, another to his merchandize. One said, I have bought a yoke of oxen, and I must needs go and

prove them; and another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. Nothing can prove more plainly than this parable the point we are now urging; for it shews, that attention to our worldly business, so far from being the same thing as attention to religion, is often the main hindrance to it. I am going to my farm, said the men in Christ's time, and therefore I cannot attend to the gospel. I am going to my farm, say these men now, but they have the face even to pretend that this is the same thing as attending to the gospel, than which nothing can be more contrary to our Saviour's declaration. Our Saviour ends his parable by assuring all the people who put him off by any such excuses, that "none of those men that were bidden shall taste of his supper;" which is as if he had said, You who give no attention to the gospel, shall have no share in the benefits of it. You have been invited, indeed, but since you do not come you shall never taste of it's salvation.

And, indeed, it seems quite agreeable to reason to suppose, that God, who has made man to consist both of body and mind, is not likely to be satisfied with his mere bodily labour, but that he must require the affections of the mind to be given to him also. If mere diligence in our calling, is all in all, I see not why a man may not be allowed even to deny the being of God: for an atheist may very possibly be led to mind his business tolerably well from mere worldly motives, and just in like manner some persons who call themselves Christians, may be induced to go on regularly with their work, all the while for-

getting God as much as if they were downright atheists.

Having thus proved, as I trust, the necessity of attending to the interests of the soul, and having also shewn, that it is not sufficient to carry on our worldly business merely on worldly principles, I shall proceed to the main point which is before us, namely, to offer the reader some help towards a serious examination of his conduct during the last year, and I trust that what will be further said will throw much additional light on the general subject.

First then I desire the reader seriously to ask himself, *what has been the ordinary ground and motive of his actions during the last year?* You profess, I doubt not, to believe in God, and you expect hereafter to be judged by him, but have you in the last year made it the leading motive of all your actions to endeavour to please him? It is in vain to think, that you have pleased him, if you have not intended to please him. How is it that we judge in cases that arise between a man and his fellow-creatures? I believe a wife, for instance, would not much thank her husband for doing her a kindness, if she thought he never intended her a kindness, and had her no at all in his thoughts when he did it. Her husband's affection is the thing she chiefly wants, and the kind action is only so far pleasing to her, as it is a symptom of this affection in the mind. Now all this is extremely reasonable: there is some nicety, I grant, in the distinction, but it is a nicety we all very well understand in our own

case, and we have no right, therefore, to say, that we cannot understand it when God is concerned. "My son," saith God to us in the Scripture, "give me thine heart." And, again, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy strength; this is the first and great commandment." Disregarding this claim, we toil, we dig, we labour for our daily bread, without almost thinking of God in it, and at the year's end we expect him to accept this bodily service (though performed with a mere view to our own worldly benefit) instead of the affections he has required of us.

Now as this is a very great and awful subject, and as it is one on which every thing else that we shall add will be made to rest, let us endeavour to lead the reader to dwell very seriously upon it. God is that being in whose character is to be found every possible perfection: He is most great, and glorious, and holy, and excellent, and bountiful, and benevolent; and he is also full of compassion and tender mercy. Has any fellow-creature a claim to our regard? God has a still clearer and more undoubted claim; and if we refuse to pay regard to God, we may on much the same ground refuse to honour our father, to love our nearest relations, and to render thanks to all our earthly benefactors. They that never think of God may, on a like principle, excuse themselves from ever thinking of them also: for is he not our Benefactor? Is he not our Father? Is it not he that sends us those very friends who are such comforts to us, and who bestows upon us all our blessings? En-

deavour now to count all his mercies to you during the past year. Number first all the blessings that have come to you by the means of friends, and all your various family comforts; these all have proceeded originally from God. Think next of the success which you may have had in your calling. It is not your own hand that has gotten you the guineas which, perhaps, you have been lately numbering. It is the Lord. Think next of the health you have had, and the degree of freedom from bodily pain. It is God also that defends us "from the noisome pestilence, from the arrow that flieth by night, and from the pestilence that walketh at noon-day." Again, think of the dangers of other kinds which you may in the last year have escaped, whether from secret enemies or open violence: the dangers to your person, to your property, and to your reputation. Why is it that you are alive and well, and in so much security at the year's end? It is because the Lord hath been with you by night and by day, to watch over you, and guard and protect you, and keep you from evil. To these mercies, if you add your own more particular and special mercies, and if you add moreover all the infinite blessings of the gospel, such as the promise of the forgiveness of sins, through Jesus Christ, and the hope of everlasting life, surely you must own that the Lord's goodness is vast and unspeakable, and that his mercies are over all his works, and that they are more in number than the hairs of your head, and as the sands on the sea shore innumerable. Do

you not now, therefore, begin to see the nature of your obligation to him, and the reasonableness of endeavouring to please a Being who is thus great and good also? What becomes then of that observation, so plausible to an irreligious mind, namely, that if we have but done our work regularly, we have fulfilled our duty, even though God has not been thought of in it? Surely it is an observation full of baseness and ingratitude. I believe no man who loves his family and friends forbears to think of them now and then while his hand is at its labour, and why are not our thoughts to ascend in like manner to God, as the great Father of mercies, while the day's business is going forward; and why may not the desire to please Him well in all things form the very motive and spur to all our industry? Has this then been the ground and motive of your diligence during the last year? This is the first question that is proposed to you.

When this duty of regarding God in all things is well settled and understood, (a duty which, by-the-by, is of all duties the strongest and clearest) then it becomes easy to prove a number of further points, which are apt otherwise to be neglected; as, for instance, *the obligation to worship God in public and in secret*. If we feel that regard to God which has been spoken of, we shall be naturally, as it were, disposed to pray to him. If we feel the obligations that have been mentioned, we shall be ready to kneel down and thank him; and if we are sensible that it is He who not only supplies our wants, but also forgives us our sins, and likewise that it is by Him

alone, as the Scripture tells us, that we are enabled to think a good thought, and to fulfil any one duty aright, it follows then that we shall be continually enlarging our petitions to Him, and that we shall call upon Him daily for all these important and indispensable blessings. Have you then been thus leading a life of dependence on God, and truly devout prayer to Him, both in the public congregation, in your family, and in secret, during the last year?

When this duty to God is well understood, then the sin of *neglecting the Sabbath* begins to seem very plain also. This is that day which has been mercifully set apart for religious uses, it therefore is the day for more particular and earnest prayer in private and in public, and also for more regular self-examination than can always take place on other days; and it may be remarked, that as on every Sunday we ought to call ourselves to account for our behaviour during the week, so at the year's end it may be proper to take ourselves to task for all our conduct on the Sabbaths; for if they have been neglected, it is more than probable that our whole duty has been neglected by us.

We will next speak of *reading the Scriptures*. The disuse of this practice arises from the same cause which we have before referred to, namely, the want of a due regard to God. Many of those who are most negligent in this point, nevertheless acknowledge the Bible to be the word of God. It is plain, therefore, that the negligence of these persons must arise from their feeling no

desire to know what is the will of their Heavenly Father; for if they felt a desire to know his will, they certainly would take all means of knowing it. If a servant had got a letter directed to him, which he believed to be from his master, and was zealous to do his master's will, do you think he would not be eager to open and read the letter? And if we are earnest in like manner to know, and do the will of God, shall we not be eager to open and read the Scriptures? I believe it is the excuse of some, that the Scriptures are difficult to be understood, and that their meaning in many places is doubtful; to which I answer, that so is the meaning of all books, more or less, to some kind of persons. The objection proves only, at the most, that you should read for the present those parts of them which are more easy, and which have the most manifest tendency to do you good. In fact, however, it is the want of a deep concern about the salvation of our souls, (which is the chief subject the Bible treats of) that causes it to appear so difficult, as well as insipid and unimproving as it does to some people.

We have spoken hitherto only of religious duties. We will now say something of the ordinary duties of life, and if we describe them truly, it will immediately appear, that even these are not likely to have been fulfilled in any respect as they ought, unless there has been a religious principle for the foundation.

First, how have you performed the *duties of your own calling* in the last year? Here it may, perhaps, be answered by some people, We have



no calling, for we are able, through the money which we have saved, or which our fathers have saved for us, to live without work. We have therefore had nothing to do; we are independent persons.—What, then, are you independent on God? It is the business of religion to put an end to this fancied right of independence, and to subject every thought, word, and action, to the will of a superior, to the will I mean of a strict and holy God. What a blessing to society is religion, when considered in this view! It turns all those persons, who are otherwise the drones of the community, into some of the most serviceable people in it. O! how many troubles and miseries are there in this land, which, if a few more of our independent ladies and gentlemen would be so good as to turn Christians, (I mean zealous Christians!) would presently be relieved. What a great number of poor cottagers are there who drag on life, both in wickedness and misery, for the want of being overlooked, and instructed, and advised, and now and then assisted by their superiors who dwell near them? Here, perhaps, a whole parish is neglected through want of a Christian parish officer; there the accounts of an hospital need examining, or a workhouse is given up to vice and ruin; here a useful club wants a treasurer or patron, or a declining charity-school is without an inspector, or a new school ought to be set up; here again a private quarrel is raging, which the interference of a superior, if he should also be a Christian, might presently heal. What innumerable opportunities also has an independent person of distributing religious

books, or conveying serious advice to those whom Providence has placed under his influence. Now these are the employments which constitute the calling of independent people. Christianity brings them to a strict sense of their responsibility in these and many other like points, and at the same time enlarges their hearts in love to all their fellow-creatures.

Well, then, have you followed this your Christian calling, and followed it diligently during the last year? Oh! no, you are one of those perhaps who have spent the whole year in some trifling employment, merely to gratify your own taste, or to please your own vanity. These are the things which have formed your chief calling, and while the vices of the poor have been dreadfully increasing in your parish, and the groans of the miserable have been almost reaching your door, you have been spending your little independent income on yourself, and fancying that all was well.

But let us next address the more labouring part of the community, and if they will allow us to examine them closely, I believe it will equally appear, that a Christian principle is necessary in their case, in order to carry them through their business with real faithfulness and integrity. First, have none of you been on the whole very idle during the last year? Are there none who have slackened in their work, because they thought the parish must relieve them whenever their idleness should have brought them to want? Are there none who have chosen rather to burthen some charitable friend than to buckle heartily to

their work? And has every one of you been as diligent just after he had got a week's wages in hand as before? Now christianity will have led you to work at all times, not on Saturday only, but on Monday also, making conscience of habitual diligence; nay, you will have been ready (as the apostle exhorts) "to work with your hands in the thing that is good, that you may have to give to him that needeth." And how have you employed both your time and thoughts when the regular hours of work have been over? "Which of you," says Christ, "having a servant ploughing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by-and-by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit thou down to meat, and will not rather say to him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself and serve *me*."—Thus does our Saviour teach us that we are all (rich, indeed, as well as poor) like so many servants, who, when we have done serving our master in the field, must then go and serve him in the house. The Christian labourer, therefore, is one who has no sooner done serving Christ by his ordinary calling abroad, than he proceeds next to serve the same master by his christian conduct at home, by useful conversation with his children, by reading a portion of Scripture to them, and by uniting with them in prayer to the great Father of mercies, for a blessing on all the family, before they lie down to rest.

Again, ask yourself whether you may not have been more or less an *eye servant*? If you are a common gardening man, have you not worked harder when the head gardener was in the garden

than when he was out of it? And if a clerk or apprentice, have you not made more speed when your employer has happened to come into the shop or counting-house? If a footman, have you been as faithful and diligent, have you risen as early, worked as steadily, gone your errands as nimbly, and turned your hand to any thing wanted of you as readily as if your master had stood by watching you? Now if you are a Christian servant, you will have done every thing under the impression, that One who is far greater than your earthly master has always been at hand observing you. "Servants," says the apostle, "obey your masters, not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."

The idleness and eye-service which have been spoken of, necessarily imply also some injustice to your employer: you have agreed with him to give him so much work for so much pay, but if you have secretly wasted in idleness, or turned to your own use a part of that time which you engaged to give your master, you have then robbed him of his due; you have as much wronged your master, as your master would have wronged you, if he had secretly taken back a part of the wages he had professed to give you, or had knowingly miscounted the money in his own favour while he was paying you.

Again: there are many kinds of dishonesty which are practised almost without reflection, and with a very quiet conscience, because custom is supposed to authorize them; the new year, therefore, seems a very proper time for examining

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into these points. It may in general be suspected, that all profits or *privileges*, as they are called, which carefully concealed, have something dishonest in them, for if they are quite honest, why should they not be publick? The difficulty of breaking through these customs is often much increased by a certain false shame, which makes people afraid of doing it, lest they should thereupon be charged with pretending to be better than their neighbours. Religion, however, tends to cure this false shame; for when a deep concern about the salvation of the soul arises, a man is carried above all those little feelings which so often interfere with his duty, and being obliged to turn over a new leaf in many great points, he takes the opportunity of rectifying a thousand smaller inadvertencies, which many men of the world, though accounted moral, never think of doing, because they have no motive strong enough to put them upon any kind of change.

We shall now name a few more subjects for self-examination, which we shall not do with much particularity, since the reader's own mind may enlarge upon them.

How have you behaved through the last year in respect to relative duties? It may not be amiss, at this time of the year, to recollect the names of our relations and connections one by one, and then to ask ourselves who is there of these whom I have either hurt by my misconduct, or neglected, through idleness or secret dislike? Who is there of them whom I have put off by a little outward complaisance, when I ought to have been affectionate and kind? Again: who is there

of them with whom I have too much agreed, not daring to shew any christian singularity in their presence, and conforming both to them and to the world, through fear of their ill will? The duty subsisting between near connections, such as husbands and wives, or parents and children, ought to form, at this time of the year, a very great subject of self-examination, and that which our christian duty dictates will be found to contribute exceedingly to increase our private happiness.

Have you also, in the last year, been temperate, sober and chaste, as the Scriptures require? Have you not allowed yourself to live in any of those vices of which the Scripture says, that "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" Again: have you been combating with all your evil tempers in the last year, and what has been your success in the conflict? Every man has some particular infirmity. Some are apt to be stubborn and self-willed; others weak and yielding. Some are bold and forward; others too fearful and ashamed. Some are sleepy and inactive; others are too busy and prone to meddle even in what does not concern them. Some are too silent, and others as much too talkative. Some have affections that are continually betraying them into inconveniences if not dangers; and some have an ungracious and disagreeable harshness with which they ought to contend. Some also have much natural pride, or a strong turn to vanity.—Now if you are used to search out your faults, you will have long since known, in some measure,

which of these may be yours, and you will be glad to be reminded, at the year's end, that you ought to enquire how far you have gained ground on that sin which has most easily beset you.

We will only mention further, have you been observant of the hand of Providence in all the events that have come across you in the last year? Have you referred your sickness or your health, your losses in trade, or your successes, as well as all the deaths in your family, and among your friends, together with every other incident of the year, to a Divine Providence, which has ordered all things that have befallen you? And have you considered the affronts and injuries of men, the hardships you have suffered, the national calamities also of which you may have borne your part, in the same religious light, namely, as the means by which God has been pleased to try you? And have you been, therefore, resigned and patient under sufferings, as well as thankful for your mercies?

And, lastly, while you are now recollecting all the escapes and deliverances you have experienced, as well as the affecting deaths and changes which you have perhaps witnessed during the last twelvemonth in your family, are you led thereby to meditate on the uncertainty of your own future life, and on the coming of that awful day, when "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to give account of the things done in the body;" and when both you and "all that are in their graves shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they

that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation."

To this subject of self-examination, which is now closed, one important remark shall be added. Perhaps some reader will have been ready to reply to some of the strict questions which have been put to him, Why, at this rate, who can be saved? If all this be necessary for salvation, I must despair, and give up the point. We would request every desponding reader to turn this tract to the following use: let him avail himself of it, in the first place, in order to alarm his fears, and to do away that false notion of innocence, which men, who never examine themselves, are apt to trust to as the ground of their salvation, and when what he has read has thus convinced him of his exceeding guilt, let it then send his thoughts to that Saviour of the world, "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Let him proceed to think deeply and often on that instructive subject of "his being justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ:" a subject, the powerful force of which, in turning the whole heart to God, the reader has, perhaps, not yet taken into his calculation. Encouraged by the pardon of which this doctrine assures him, if he is penitent, and accepting most heartily and thankfully its free and undeserved salvation, let him then account himself to be "not his own," but "bought with a price;" and let him "live no longer to himself, but to

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him that hath died for him." A heart warmed with gratitude to Christ, will stand in the place of a thousand arguments; it will make that labour pleasant which otherwise seems intolerable: and it will cause all those duties, which we seemed to describe with so much strictness, to appear now no more than a just and reasonable service.

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AN HYMN for the NEW YEAR.

O GOD, our help in ages past,  
Our hope in years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home.

To thee we pay our yearly vow  
Of humble thanks and praise;  
To thee we freely offer now  
The remnant of our days.

Lord, if our sins are counted o'er,  
They strike us with surprise,  
Not all the sands upon the shore  
To equal numbers rise.

Teach us to feel our guilty state,  
To view the path we've trod;  
Teach us to sue at mercy's gate  
Before we meet our God.

310 *Some New Thoughts for the New Year.*

Teach us to walk with ready feet,  
In thy most holy ways;  
To count our Saviour's service sweet,  
And give him all the praise.

Thus when the sun at thy command  
Shall cease his yearly round,  
When at thy bar the world shall stand  
And the last trumpet sound;

Then while the awful sentence rings  
In sleepy sinners' ears;  
To us our God redemption brings,  
And endless are our years.

T H E

## HARVEST HOME.

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HOW quickly does joy often succeed to sorrow; the day of cheerful hope to that of gloomy fear; and the season of plenty and abundance, to that of want and scarcity! At one time the dearth of bread in this land was such, that every countenance seemed to gather blackness: the very heavens also appeared to frown upon us; for the weather, during a long time, was so dismal, that it threatened to blast the approaching harvest: having enjoyed many years of plenty without interruption, we had learnt to count upon the continuance of the same blessing; and because God's goodness had been so common, we were so much the less thankful for it.

But let us here endeavour to prevent this forgetfulness of our present mercies from taking place in the minds of our readers, and let us invite them to come and contemplate with us, that greatness and goodness of our Creator, which are so observable at the time of harvest.

There is, indeed, no part of the creation to which we can turn our eyes, without meeting with some proofs of the divine power and mercy. Shall we lift up our eyes to the heavens? There shines the brightness of the sun, which God has

placed in the firmament to give light and heat to the world. Shall we wait till the sun is set? then the moon and the stars take up the same language of praise, and tell of their Maker's power and goodness.

Shall we turn our eyes to the earth? See how the surface of it is spread forth like a carpet, decked with every thing to charm the eye, to delight the sense, and to supply the wants of man. Shall we look upon the great and wide ocean? There go the ships; and behold even the sea is filled with food for the use of man. "How manifold are thy works, O Lord; in wisdom hast thou made them all!"

The sight of these common objects of nature used often to carry out the holy men of old in praise and adoration to God, of which we will mention an instance in the 65th Psalm, because it is applicable to the present time; a psalm penned after a long drought, to which had succeeded some very plentiful and refreshing rains. The Psalmist, while he walks abroad, and delights himself with the beautiful appearance of the harvest, and with the prospect of plenty which is on every side, breaks out in the following thanksgiving to the bountiful giver of all things. "Praise waiteth for thee, O God! in Sion, and unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou that didst hear our prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.—Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. Thou visitest the earth and waterest it. Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God," (for the clouds are compared to a river in the air, sustained by the

hand of the Almighty.) “Thou preparest corn when thou hast so provided for it: Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof; thou makest it soft with showers:” “Thou bledest the springing thereof; thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness; the little hills rejoice on every side; the pastures are clothed with flocks; the vallies also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.”

To every one who is of the same mind with the Psalmist, the same kind of meditations will be very apt to occur. Let us, however, here assist the reader, by naming a few subjects, which he will do well to reflect upon while he takes his walk amidst the reapers, and admires the plenty that is in the fields.

First, then, how naturally ought the season of harvest to send our thoughts to the *great author* of it! How clearly is his hand at this time seen! All the power and ingenuity of the whole world cannot frame so much as a single ear of corn. The part which man has in procuring the corn is very small indeed. He in fact does *nothing* himself towards its growth; he only places the seed in a situation, which from experience he has found to be favourable to it, and then “He goeth away and it springeth up he knoweth not how.” The seed which he plants, was in the first place given by God; when the sower has put it into the ground, there is then a work or operation carried on, in which man is not only unconcerned, but he does not even know how

it is accomplished.—The grain dies, and from that death a resurrection takes place, a fresh plant arises out of the ground, and this plant is nourished by means of roots hidden within the earth, which then shoot forth without the aid of man: in this secret manner are the different juices collected and sent through the plant; by-and-by the flower blooms; the ear forms itself, and the corn takes the proper shape and substance; the rain in the mean time waters it, the dews descend, and the sun shines upon it, till at length it is fit for the use of man. In all this man can do nothing. It is during his absence even that this work is going on. If the grain is blighted, man cannot help it; if it grows too slowly, he is not able to quicken it; he can only look on with hope and fear, and watch it in its different stages: he must ascribe all its growth to the unassisted power of the great Creator of all things.

Plain as the hand of the Creator is in the production of the corn, yet such is our natural stupidity, that while we gather the corn we often think no more of God in it, than the very cattle which draw it home. The farmer speaks of his own skill, and labour, and pains; and when the grain is ripe, he lays it up in his barn with much self-applause, and begins to count his gains, not considering that all the praise, in fact, is due to God, and that every ear, which is laid up, is a proof of man's obligation to his maker.

But let us here notice also the *largeness* of the Divine bounty. The works of God are upon a

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large scale ; they are like himself, infinite. The works of man are little and insignificant ; it is but a small spot which his strength can water ; but the showers of heaven water a whole territory at once. It is but a few acres which the diligent labours of man can make productive ; but God causes his sun to shine, and his dew to descend, and the whole earth is rendered fruitful. Look over that beautiful and extensive prospect ; see as far as the eye can reach how the fields are crowned with plenty : extend the scene in your imagination, still the same rich view of the Divine bounty presents itself. Cross the wide ocean, and survey the different countries of which the earth consists. In all the varied productions of these different climates we only meet with more signs of the Divine goodness. How are we then called upon to admire and adore that glorious Being who suffers no part of the earth to escape his kind and benignant notice !

With the extensiveness of this bounty let the *continuance* of it be considered. No sooner is the harvest got in, than again the seed is committed to the ground, and again the same scene returns upon us. Let us carry back our thoughts to the years that have been of old. How unwearied has been our Great Benefactor ! How unceasing the exertions of his goodness ! How many generations have been fed and supported by it ! Seasons have changed, but they have only presented different views of the Lord's mercy ; and the cold of winter, the bloom of

spring, the heat of summer, and the fruits of autumn, have each in their seasons manifested the same bounty and care of our Creator.

Having indulged in these pleasing reflections upon the Divine bounty, it seems proper in the next place to turn our attention to a more melancholy subject, I mean *our unworthiness of it*. For whom does the Lord open his stores, and provide with so liberal a hand? For a race of creatures who are touched with the most lively sense of his goodness, and love and honour him in proportion to these great obligations.

Do we then hear the reapers, while they cut down the corn, speaking good of the name of the Lord, and blessing him for his kindness to the children of men? Hark! is it the hymns of praise, which they are chanting in yonder field? Is the song they sing that song of the Psalmist which has just been spoken of? Methinks, instead of it, some song full of profaneness and obscenity is sung aloud. The name of God, indeed, is on many lips, but it is only that it may be trifled with or blasphemed. What then, are these men gathering God's bounty, and, in the same moment, profaning his name? But follow them to the harvest home: surely, now, at least, they meet and offer up their prayer and thanksgiving, and while God is in the act of crowning the year with his bounty, each tongue is loud in talking of his mercy, and each grateful heart is swelling with his praise. It is commonly reported, that there is no season of the year in which so much wickedness and drunkenness pre-

vail among the farmers, as in that of bringing the harvest home. Are these then the returns which in this year also we are making to the Divine goodness? Is all our complaining of want, and our prayer to God for deliverance, to end in a drunken abuse of the mercies he so wonderfully bestows?

But not to dwell on vices which are so great, that we would willingly hope they must only be the vices of a few, let us a little consider also the *general* unworthiness of mankind. Who are they that will be fed by this abundant harvest? Will no idle persons be maintained by it? Will no sinners have their strength sustained, so as to continue their life of sin? Will there be none who will eat it with unthankfulness? None, who, as the reapers have reaped it without thinking of the Author of the harvest, will in like manner feed upon it without thinking of the Author of their food? Again, will no discontented, murmuring, repining people be fed by this goodness of the Lord? Will all those, in short, whose life is prolonged by the bread now sent them, devote that life to the service of him who prolonged it? Surely if we could remove ourselves to a distance from the earth, and become by any means impartial judges between God and man, we should stand astonished at the present rebellion of the creature. He who made man, he who supports him, sending him the very bread which he eats, has a right to his services: and hath made him, no doubt, for his own glory. Methinks if any of us were

endowed with power to create some little rational animal, inferior to ourselves, and if, after having breathed into him the breath of life, we also daily clothed and nourished him, we should expect his obedience and constant service in return: and if, after all, such a being should presume to set up for himself, and pretend to have a will of his own, and break all the laws we had given him, we should be ready, methinks, to stamp our foot upon him, and to crush him to death at once, for not fulfilling the ends of his creation. We should have no patience with such a little insolent and rebellious animal. And yet God has patience with us, notwithstanding all our forgetfulness of the ends for which we were born, and our unthankfulness for the daily returns of his bounty. Nay, though we go on abusing his mercies, he goes on cloathing the pastures with his flocks. The vallies also are again covered over with corn; again they shout, for joy they also sing. O let us be ashamed of the baseness of our ingratitude, and repent in the name of Christ, before the day of his vengeance is come upon us.

The season of harvest is also one which should lead us particularly to reflect on our *dependence upon God*. God gave us life at first. He causes our blood to flow, our heart to beat, and our stomach to distribute the nourishment. He too supplies the food we eat, of whatever kind it be. We may combine together different meats; we may dress them in a variety of ways, but we can create nothing: God is the only giver of life and food, and all things: and happy is that man who

lives in the lively remembrance of this, who accepts all his comforts as from the hand of the great God, habitually feeling, that he has not of himself power to subsist for a single moment, or to procure, independent of God, one single drop of water, or grain of bread. And this sense of our dependance is not a duty only, it is a great comfort also: for how does it tend to relieve all that anxiety which is so natural to us, about our subsistence in the time to come. The more we remember that we are the creatures of God, so much the more shall we trust to him to provide for his large family, even as a child trusts to the care and prudence of his parent. "Behold the fowls of the air, they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them."

Next to this sense of our dependance, *gratitude* to God may be mentioned as peculiarly becoming. Methinks, at this time, not only the Heavens above, but the earth beneath, calls aloud upon us to be thankful.—Every field, every ear of corn, seems to bid us speak the praises of God.—How do these glorify him, as it were, by an expressive though dumb offering of praise!—But man has a tongue with which he can speak forth the praises of his Maker. It is for the sake of man also that the store-house of Divine bounty is opened; it is for man that the pastures are clothed with flocks, and the vallies covered with corn; it is for man that the sun shines, and the showers descend.

From him then should the offering of praise continually rise up.

But why will you suppose mankind to be so unthankful? Methinks I hear some one reply, Do you think we do not know as well as you that we ought to praise God for a good harvest? There will always indeed be a few wicked people in the land, but in general we understand well enough that it is God who sends us bread, and all our mercies: nay, when any of us speak of having got a good crop, *Thank God*, is the very phrase that is quite common in our lips.—I admit it is so, and I hope, indeed, that many thousand hearts have already offered up the sincere tribute of thanksgiving for the present plentiful season. But we cannot help adding here, that there is a way far beyond that of simple praise, by which true gratitude will manifest itself. It will break out not in words only but in deeds, in deeds I mean of obedience to him towards whom the gratitude is felt. What would any father think of the gratitude of a child, or any husband of the gratitude of a wife, which never shewed itself in any thing else but a few warm expressions of obligation? No, it is by the readiness and activity in serving the person praised, and by the desire in all respects to please him, that the disposition to gratitude must be judged of. A man may say *Thank God*, twenty times a day, and yet never truly thank him in his heart. Words are cheap. Many men think to pay God off, as it were, by this sort of coin. Let it be remarked also, that there is a satisfaction and self-complacency which

are naturally felt on receiving abundance of wealth into our lap : we are put into good-humour by it, and when we are reminded that God is the author of our prosperity, the truth of this is so plain that we cannot deny it, and since our understandings agree to the observation, we fancy that our hearts agree also; whereas, in fact, we only *judge* that God *ought* to be thanked, but we do not thank him; and as to the good humour we are in, it arises merely from our being well pleased with ourselves, or with the enjoyments which God hath given us, and not from our being well pleased with God. That we practise some such frauds as these on ourselves is but too plain; for mark now what follows. When the same person who has been thanking God so often for his mercies, is by-and-by called to do something, to suffer something, or to give up something for the sake of serving this gracious Being to whom he professed such prodigious gratitude, he is then either too idle, or too selfish, or too much governed by the opinion of his fellow-creatures, or some way or other too full of excuses to do what is wanted of him; on the other hand, when some temptation comes in his way he yields to it, and sins against the same God as freely as if he were under no obligation to him. Let us then beware of this hypocritical sort of gratitude, by which we cannot deceive God, though we often delude ourselves by it. Let us shew forth his praise not only with our lips but with our lives. Let us shew our sense of his goodness by doing his will, by reading his word, by attending his worship,

by readily denying ourselves for his sake, and, in short, by laying out our lives in his service, and by standing forth to promote his cause in a disobedient and unthankful world.

Here let it be hinted also, that this may be a good time for laying down our plans for using the plenty which is flowing in to us. God has now given us provision for another year, but for what purpose has he given it? In order that we may eat and drink, and be merry? What then have we not immortal souls? The great end of our Creator is, that we may serve him in this world, and may be prepared to dwell with him for ever in Heaven. His direction is, that we should employ our health and strength, and all our vigour of body and mind, in fulfilling his will; that we should seek, in the first place, to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent into the world, and having learnt to know him, that we should then act in our several stations from the motive of love to his name, imitating all his bounty, by ministering to the necessities of our fellow-creatures. Are these then our ends of living? Is this what we propose to ourselves? Are these the views with which we reap the harvest? Are we determined that none of it, as far as in us lies, shall be wasted in riot or in luxury, or in improvident consumption? Do we look forward to it as to a treasure, with which the hungry shall be fed, and the poor be satisfied? Then, indeed, we may rejoice in the bounty of Heaven, and we may reasonably trust that all the expressions of gratitude on our lips are sincere.

Again: let the consideration of the goodness of God, displayed in the fruits of the earth, raise our minds to the contemplation of those still greater mercies which he is able and willing to give us. It is with him a small matter to provide the earth with food, or to take care of the body. See what a rich provision he has made for our souls—for them he has not spared his only begotten Son, but given him up to be the propitiation for our sins! For the sake of the soul he has sent his Holy Spirit into the world, to guide men into the knowledge of truth. For the soul he has prepared an eternal harvest of blessings, “an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us.” We may learn to value spiritual mercies from what we see of temporal ones. Temporal ones strike the senses, and being suited to our present fallen nature, are more apt to fill our hearts with joy and gratitude. But we may rest assured that the blessings, which God has provided for the soul, are as much superior to those provided for the body, as the soul is to the body, and as eternity is to time. Let us then turn from this earthly scene of abundance to still nobler and larger blessings. Let the fields not only preach to us the immense goodness of our Creator, but let them send our thoughts also to the “unsearchable riches that are in Christ.” Let the harvest serve to impress a thoughtless world with wonder, gratitude, reverence, and love to Him who is the author, not of all our earthly treasures only, but of all the blessings of eternity! In

short, let the goodness of God lead us all to repentance, and let each of us take care that the mercies of his Maker be not turned into a curse, by rendering our hearts only so much the more full of this world, and more indifferent to the blessings of the gospel.

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## GENERAL RESURRECTION.



**EVER** since sin entered into the world, and death by sin, this earth hath been a vast graveyard, or burying-place for her children. In every age, and in every country, that sentence has been executing, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." Mankind at first consisted only of one pair, but how inconceivably numerous are now the sons of Adam! One single nation commonly contains many millions of men, and these millions form only one generation. How many, then, must be the millions that have appeared on

the earth in the long run of near six thousand years ! Let imagination call up this vast army ;— infants that have just lived to see the light, multitudes of the young and middle aged, and all the old and grey-headed also—persons of all countries, and of successive generations—let them all pass in review before us, and how vast and astonishing is the multitude ! If the posterity of one man, Abraham, by one of his sons, was, according to the language of divine promise, “ as the stars of heaven, and as the sand by the seashore, innumerable,” who can compute the multitudes that have sprung from all the different patriarchs ? Who can number the long line of children that have proceeded from Adam, and all the families of the earth that have sprung from the loins of Noah ! But what is now become of this vast and inconceivable host ? Alas ! they are again turned into earth, their original element ; they are all sunk into the grave, excepting only the present generation ; and we also are going down, one after another, into that place appointed for all living. There has hardly, perhaps, been one moment of time, during the space of many thousand years, in which one person or other has not been dropping into the grave ; and in some seasons, through the sword of war, the devouring pestilence, or rather visitations of God, thousands have been mowed down at once, and have formed one undistinguished heap of dead. The greater part of mankind beyond comparison, are now sleeping under ground. There lies beauty, mouldering into dust, a prey to the vilest worms ; there lies the mean and humble beggar ; and there

lies the head that once wore a crown. There lies the mighty giants, the Samsons, and the Cæsars of the world. There lie the wise and the learned, as weak and helpless as the fool. There lie some with whom we ourselves have conversed, and who were once our dear friends and companions; there lie our fathers and mothers; and there, perhaps, also lies a tender wife or husband, a child, a sister, or a brother.

And shall they lie there always? Shall this body, that curious workmanship of God, "so fearfully and wonderfully made," continue always in these ruins, and shall it never be restored? This we know, that "it is not a thing impossible with God to raise the dead." He that could first form our bodies out of nothing is just as able to form them anew, and to repair the wastes of time and death. But what has he declared to be his intention in this case? for on this the matter turns; and it is a point which is fully revealed in the Scriptures. "The hour is coming," says that sacred book, "when all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth; they that have done well, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation." "Behold," says St. Paul, "I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep," (that is, mankind will not all be sleeping in death when the day of the resurrection comes, for there will be one generation remaining then alive upon earth;) "but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised

incorruptible, and we shall be changed." "For the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air."

Let us now realize the majesty and terror of this tremendous day. When the multitudes of the dead are sleeping in the silent grave; when many, perhaps, of the living, are thoughtless of this great event; when some men are running eagerly, as they are now, after riches and honours, and some after sensual pleasures; while they are eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage; while some are asleep in the dead of night; while some are planning future mischief; and some are in the very act of sin: while the course of nature seems to go on as usual, so that unbelieving scoffers take occasion from thence to ask, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."—When, perhaps, a few only are serving God, and are looking for their Saviour's appearance—while the multitude in short no more expect the approaching judgment than the people of Sodom did the destruction which befel them on that fine clear morning when Lot fled away: or than the people of the old world expected the deluge on the day when Noah entered the ark—then suddenly shall the Heavens open over the astonished world, and "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised in-

corruptible;" for, in an instant, the sound shall reach all the mansions of the dead, and, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," the dead shall be raised, and the living shall be changed. This call will be as effectual in raising each of the sons of men as ever that call of Christ was, "Lazarus, come forth." O, what a surprise will it be to the thoughtless world! Should this alarm burst over our heads this moment, with what terror would it strike many a one who reads this description of it? How dreadful, then, will be the surprise and consternation when this event shall actually come to pass! Now, indeed, there are many who stop their ears: now, though the voice of Mercy calls, though Reason pleads, and Conscience warns, yet multitudes will not hear; but then there shall be no one among the millions of mankind that shall be able to disobey the summons, for the living shall start and be changed, and the dead rise at the sound.

But for what purpose shall they rise? It is in order that they may come to judgment. "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and must give an account of the things done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil."—"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal."—"And I saw," says the apostle, "the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works: and the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hell (that is the place of departed

spirits) delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works—and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”—“ And I saw (continues the same apostle) “ a new Heaven and a new earth, for the first Heaven and the first earth were passed away. And I heard a great voice out of Heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, for the former things are passed away.—And he that sat on the throne, said, Behold I make all things new.—In like manner, we are told in another place, that “ the Heavens and the earth are but kept in store until the day of destruction and perdition of ungodly men;” and that when this “ great and terrible day of the Lord” shall come, then “ the very elements shall melt with fervent heat—the earth also, and all the works thereof shall be burnt up”—“ the heavens shall depart as a scroll”—“ they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shall be changed;” and there shall then be “ new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Well might the apostle say, “ Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness !”

There are many things spoken of in Scripture that shall follow the grand scene of the resurrection, which remain to be described; but we shall speak in this place only of one further point, and that is, of the person who is to be our Judge.

It will be Jesus Christ, "for the Father," says the Scripture, "judgeth no man, for God hath committed all judgment to the Son, because he is the Son of man." "This same Jesus," said the angels, just after his resurrection, "which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Once he was "despised and rejected of men;" "he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth;" he was "mocked, and buffeted, and spit upon;" he was himself arraigned before the bar of Pontius Pilate, and he was hung upon the cross, as if he was the vilest malefactor, the whole multitude having joined in crying, Crucify him, Crucify him.—But now, "Behold he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all nations of the earth shall wail because of him." "For the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;" now also he is "come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." Some men think, that to forget or to disobey Christ is no great matter; they are good, as they call it, in their own way, and therefore they are satisfied. But such men should be reminded, that it is not at the bar of their own reason, nor even at the bar merely of their own consciences that they are to be tried, but that they are to be tried at the bar of Jesus Christ. "The word that I have spoken to you," said our

Saviour to the Pharisees, "it shall judge you at the last day." Let us further enquire, then, what Christ hath spoken to us, and what the Scripture in general hath said respecting the manner of our trial on the day of judgment, for this is the way in which alone we can truly know whether we shall be acquitted or condemned.

Of all the subjects in religion there is none more deeply interesting than that of the general judgment. That some sort of day of reckoning will come upon the world, is what few men, I believe, have ever doubted, for it is a very natural persuasion. Some new philosophers, indeed, have attempted to teach people to the contrary, but surely it is hard to believe that there will be one event to the righteous and to the wicked, and that the grossest sinner and the purest saint, the man who has indulged himself without caring how much he hurt his fellow-creatures, and he who hath both done and suffered much in order to do them good, shall each, when they die, be placed in the very same circumstances by God. No; we all are apt to agree in the general belief, that there will come a day of judgment; the point in which we differ is, the particular mode in which the Almighty will deal with us when we are brought to trial, and the sort of preparation for it which is necessary. Even those who profess themselves Christians, vary much from one another in this particular, for we have all our own opinions and prepossessions; and though we think that we believe the Bible, yet, in fact, we all, more or less, invent a day of

judgment of our own, instead of seeking light from the revealed word of God.

“ It is appointed unto all men,” says the Scripture, “ once to die, and after death the judgment.” What then is the nature of this judgment? There is no doubt, I think, that some trial is undergone immediately after death, and that a suitable state of happiness or of misery is appointed for every one as soon as he leaves this earth. “ This day,” said our Saviour to the penitent thief, “ thou shalt be with me in Paradise.” But what is here meant to be spoken of is rather that public and universal judgment which we are taught to expect at the final consummation of all things, in which God will manifest his mode of dealing with his creatures before his holy angels, and before all the assembled world.

The Scriptures have given us many very plain notices of what is to take place on this great day, and of the rules by which God will judge us; and it is worthy of remark, that what the Scriptures teach is very agreeable to what, if our minds were free from all corrupt bias, we might naturally suppose to be the dealings of a very wise and merciful, and, at the same time, of a very righteous and holy God.

In the first place, then, I would observe, that the Scriptures declare it to be an universal truth, that “ GOD SHALL JUDGE EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS WORKS.” Jews and Gentiles, men of every age of the world, and of every sect; men of every language and nation shall be “ judged, every man according to his works, for there is no respect of persons before God.” Those, indeed,

“ who have been without law,” that is, those who have not had the Scriptures given them, “ and who have sinned without law,” it is said in the Romans, “ shall also perish without law,” while those, it is added, “ who have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.” Christ, we may take occasion here to remark, is ordained by God to judge us in this manner, “ for he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained;” and again it is said, “ for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether they be good or whether they be evil.”

That we are all to be judged according to our works, is a plain and obvious first principle of religion; the Scriptures, nevertheless, again and again repeat this truth in our ears: they do so, in order, no doubt, to ground us in it thoroughly, and to prevent our so misunderstanding any of the Christian doctrines, as to think they justify us in departing from this fundamental truth. Thus, for instance, it is said again, “ To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality, he shall render eternal life; but unto them that are contentious (that is, as I suppose, contentious against God) and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish on every soul of man that doeth evil, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.” “ And I saw the dead,” says St. John, “ small and great stand before God, and the books were opened, and the sea

gave up the dead that were<sup>1</sup> in it, and death and hell (that is the place of departed spirits) gave up the dead that were in them, and they were judged, every man, according to his works."

When our Saviour speaks of false pretenders to religion, he recommends it to us to follow this same rule of judging, by which his own conduct will be guided on the great day. "Ye shall know them," says he, "by their fruits; do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" While of his true disciples he says, "I have ordained you that ye should go forth and bear much fruit." We will only quote one passage more with a view to this point. "Marvel not," says the Saviour of the world in another place, "for the hour cometh in which all that are in their graves shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation."

We shall have now to request the reader's very careful attention while we proceed to shew what is meant in Scripture "by doing good and doing evil, and by being thus judged, every man according to his works," for there is much room for error on this point if we do not seek for an explanation of the matter in the word of God. But as this subject is one which will need to be treated at some length, we shall reserve it for a separate discussion.

THE  
JUDGMENT DAY.

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**WE** have already shewn that the day of judgment is that day when we must all appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ, and must be judged every one according to his works, whether they be good or evil. We have also noticed, that it is of importance rightly to understand what is meant in Scripture by good and bad works, or by doing good and doing evil; and that there is much error in the world on this subject: we must now proceed, therefore, with this most interesting enquiry.

Here then, first, I would observe that there are many sins spoken of in Scripture (some of them sins made very light of by men) which, if a man lives in them habitually, are considered by the apostle as at once deciding the man's character; and they are called works of the flesh. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest; which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, emulations, wrath, strife, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like, and they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." And again, "be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor

extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Sinners of this class may here read their doom as plainly as if their very names were written in the word of God. O that they would therefore repent, and flee from the wrath to come, "for hath the Lord said and will he not do it?" The mercies of God indeed are great to the penitent and contrite heart; they extend even to the chief of sinners, and blessed be his name, they are also sure mercies; but so also are his judgments sure to them that live and die in their iniquity.

But there are various other marks given in Scripture whereby a man may know whether he shall come under condemnation. "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but if ye, through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." And again, "to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." What is it then to be carnally minded and to live after the flesh? It is, undoubtedly, to follow our natural inclinations, instead of following the good motions of the holy spirit of God; it is to live as we like, to go where we like, to say and do what we like, to spend our time and our money just as we like, and to let our corrupt imaginations rove wherever they like; it is to live to please ourselves, instead of living to please God. I may here also remark, that there are sins of the mind which will just as much condemn a man on the judgment day, if they have ruled over him, as any sins of the body, and it may be observed that emulations, wrath, strife and envyings, have been already named, together with murders and adultery; I may add, that pride is

often treated of in Scripture as highly offensive to God, and humility as one of the best signs of acceptance, for "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace (or favour) to the humble." A readiness to judge others is also a very bad sign. "Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged;" so likewise is an unforgiving spirit; "for if ye forgive not men their trespasses," says our Saviour, "neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." And in the Old Testament it is most awfully declared, that "he shall have judgment without mercy that hath shewed no mercy." O what need shall we all have of mercy on that day, and how dreadful a crime will it then seem, to have been in our life time hard and unrelenting towards our fellow-creatures, in comparison of what it does now. The sins even of the tongue will also be enquired into, for "the tongue, though a little member, is a fire, a world of iniquity." It is inconceivable how much good or ill is done by it. The tongue, indeed, is an index of the heart; and therefore it is said, "by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

We have spoken hitherto only of actual sins, and of these but shortly, but I must hasten to remark that there are virtues which must be practised if we would hope to enter Heaven, as well as crimes which must be avoided. Some people are apt to think that nine-tenths of the actions of their lives are of a class which may be called indifferent. There is no good, they own, in them, but they trust, neither is there any harm. But

the Scriptures are far from favouring notions of this sort ; and I think there is reason to suppose, that when the day of judgment comes, it will not be so much a few great crimes on the one hand, or a few shining virtues on the other, that will decide a man's character, as the ordinary tenor of his life, and ~~the~~ general disposition of his heart, as to what some may call the more indifferent, and the lesser matters. Our Saviour, in order to impress his disciples with a just notion of the complete accountableness of man, and of the punishment due to unprofitableness, spake to them the following parable : " A certain man went into a far country, and he called his servants and delivered to each of them his goods ; and to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one ; and after a long time, he cometh and reckoneth with them." Now this is to represent God's manner of dealing with us his creatures ; he has given us endowments of many kinds ; a certain portion of wealth, for instance, and of other things, (to some of us more, and to others less) all which we are required to use in the service of the giver, and the day of judgment is that time of reckoning, when he will call upon us to give account how far we have done so. Every thing we had in this world will then be considered, not as having been our own, to do what we pleased with it, but as having been our Lord's goods ; and the question to be tried at the judgment day will be, whether we have been faithful in our stewardship. In the parable, we have, first, a description of some servants who

improved their talents for their Lord's use ; and to each of these it is said, " Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord ;" but one servant is spoken of who had " buried his talent in the earth," that is, who had turned it to no profit, for it is not said that he had done any particular harm with it, and on him is passed a solemn sentence of condemnation. Woe be to that person, therefore, who shall be obliged to confess on the judgment day, that while he was in this world, he idled away his time, that precious talent entrusted to him by his Maker, in such a manner as to bring no honour to God, and no good to his fellow-creatures ; as for instance, in empty talk, in unproductive work, and in needless amusements ; who shall be forced to own also, that he considered his health and strength as given him only for his own enjoyment, that he exerted his abilities for no other end than to get for himself honour or profit, that he employed his influence all for the same purpose ; and that he spent the wealth which God gave him in order to do good with it, in nothing else than in procuring ease and pleasure, and a multitude of superfluities for himself and his family. A man of this kind possibly may be brought in guilty of no very signal crime, but he, undoubtedly, is the person who is pointed at in the parable, and who is condemned by that sentence denounced at the end of it : " Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

This may not be an improper place to add, that a man's faith will unquestionably be required

into on the day of judgment. "Without faith," says the Scripture, "it is impossible to please God." Faith also in our Saviour, as well as in the great doctrines of his gospel, is every where required, as necessary to salvation. "Go preach the gospel to all nations, he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." "He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the only begotten Son of God." And the reasonableness of thus condemning men for their unbelief, is also explained; "for this," says our Saviour, "is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil!" When men do not believe, the Scriptures describe the reason to be, that there is in them "an evil heart of unbelief to depart from the living God." They never talk of the good heart of an unbeliever. All, all are called upon to repent and believe at their peril, and to obey God's blessed gospel, and are taught to expect that they shall be rewarded or punished in the next life, as they have or have not done so.

What an astonishing proof was it of the condescension and goodness of God, that he should send his only begotten Son into the world to die for us, as well as to teach us the way in which we ought to walk, and to bring life and immortality to light by the gospel; what mercy is it that God should provide for us mansions in the heavenly world; and that he should offer us his Holy Spirit to produce all the necessary pre-

parations of heart within us ! This rich offer of God in the gospel, is compared in the Scripture to the invitation of a man who prepares a great feast or supper, and sends to call many guests, saying, " my oxen and my fatlings are killed, come, for all things are ready." The world, in general, slight the offer of the gospel ; they plead business, or amusement, or engagement with their connexions ; and they are therefore compared in the same parable to persons who, when the invitation to the supper comes, " go one to his farm, and another to his merchandize, and a third to his wife," each of them saying, " I pray thee have me excused."

It is observable, that the invitation of the parable appears here to be somewhat civilly declined, and that certainly no violent insult to the master of the feast seems intended ; and yet he is represented as considering it to be a sufficient affront that they merely will not come to partake of the feast which he had been at the expence of preparing for them. " None of those men," says he, " which were bidden, shall taste of my supper." In this manner are we taught, that if we attend not to the gospel, even though we should be guilty of no intentional disrespect to God, or to Jesus Christ, we shall not be permitted hereafter to taste of the heavenly happiness ; " for how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation !"

The same point may be very decisively proved from some expressions at the end of the following awful passage ; " For the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty angels,

in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe, because our testimony was believed in that day."

And here, if it should be asked, But how comes it that we are to be tried for our faith, when it has been already said, that it is by our works that we shall be judged? I answer, most evidently the word "works" is in such places as these to be understood in the very largest and most general sense; a point which must have partly appeared already. The word is to be understood, as it seems to me, in a sense so large, that even our faith is to be included in it. The justice of this observation will, perhaps, be more fully admitted, after considering the following passages. When the Pharisees came to Christ, and said, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" he answered, "this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent;" that is to say, this is the first and great work that you have to attend to, namely, to believe in me, and then the other good works which God would have you to do, will follow in their due order. *Believing* then, is expressly termed, *a work that is to be done*, in this passage of Scripture. It is said in another place, "This is the *commandment* of God, that ye *believe* on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ." Here then, to believe in Christ is spoken of as one

of God's commandments; and to disbelieve in Christ, is, of course, to break God's commandment. Now it is plain, that to break God's commandment in this, in the same manner as in any other point, must be an evil work, and that it must be a work for which we shall have to be judged when we come to the day of judgment.

But here let it also be strongly insisted on, that it is not a barren and unfruitful faith that will stand the test of that awful time of trial. It is not a man's having been right in his doctrines, and sound and orthodox in his creed, that will be the means of saving his soul. No : we are well warned in Scripture, that all that faith which did not teach a man to depart from iniquity, will be pronounced to have been a dead faith, and utterly unavailing; "for as the body without the spirit is dead, even so faith without works is dead also;" and "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

The Scriptures give us much reason to suppose, that the number of persons who will have had this false faith, and will have fondly trusted to it, and who will therefore, quite unexpectedly to themselves, be condemned as evil doers on the judgment-day, will prove not inconsiderable; and it seems, from several passages, that among these persons will be some who had known Christ familiarly in the days of his flesh; others who had possessed great gifts in the church; and not a few in all ages who had made a forward profession of his religion, who had had a strong conceit of their

being some of the people of God, and a high confidence of their salvation.

The following passage, which describes the future disappointment of the Pharisees, and it is to be feared also of many others, who will, in like manner, be shut out of heaven, is very remarkable. "Strive to enter in," says our Saviour, "at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and has shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say, I know you not whence ye are; then shall ye begin to say, we have eaten and drunken in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. Then shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourself thrust out. For they shall come from the east and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God, and behold there are last which shall be first, and the first last."

Thus it seems that there will be numbers whom Christ will acknowledge as his saints, and will gather into his church in heaven, who were not acknowledged as true Christians by many of their brethren here below; and the reason of this error is, that here we judge sometimes too hastily

and by outward appearance, and, at other times, by false marks of grace; for it is not easy to bring men to try either themselves or others by the true scriptural test. "Depart from me," (says our Saviour in like manner, in another place, to some who boasted much of their attachment to him) "I know ye not, ye workers of iniquity." O, how much easier is it to attend the preaching of the gospel, and to be present also at the Lord's table, to talk religiously, and to get credit with a religious circle, and even to persuade ourselves that we are religious, than it is to leave off iniquity. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Indeed, it is not possible at present to separate exactly the truly pious Christian from the hypocrite and self-deceiver; "the tares and the wheat therefore must grow up together until the time of harvest; but then shall the husbandman say unto the reapers, Bind ye together the tares in bundles to burn them, but gather ye the wheat into my garner."

There are various signs to which, on the judgment-day, our Saviour will appeal for the reality of the religion of his followers, and one of these I will now dwell upon, because it is in the evangelist Matthew very specially mentioned; I mean that kindness and condescension which Christians will have been in the habit of exercising to the poor, and to all their suffering brethren. Their alms, indeed, not like the alms of the worldly man, will have been bestowed for

the Lord's sake, and with a simple and humble mind, according to that precept of their Saviour, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." Let every man, therefore, and especially every rich man, who calls himself a Christian, try himself by this test, as ever he would hope to stand uncondemned at the great day of our Lord's appearance. That great and solemn scene is thus described by our Saviour: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat; thirsty, and ye gave me drink; a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me; in prison, and ye came unto me." But they, being little disposed to take credit for any good works which they had done, are represented as replying, "Lord, when saw we thee a hungry, or thirsty, or naked?" Then shall he say unto them, "Forasmuch as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." "Then shall he say to them on his left hand, Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was an hungry, and

ye gave me no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; naked, and ye clothed me not, sick and in prison, and ye visited me not." Then shall they say, (being astonished at the accusation brought against them, and, quite unwilling to allow it) "Lord, when saw we thee hungry or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" Then shall he answer them, "Verily I say unto thee, forasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

O, let us beware of that sort of religion which does not expand the heart in love to God, as well as in fervent kindness and charity to our fellow-creatures; and let us, I will add, beware of that sort of kindness which consists much in soft and civil words, but very little in beneficent and self-denying actions. "For if a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body, what doth it profit?"

The sum which professing Christians will have given in charity, will, no doubt, be enquired into on the day of judgment, as well as the walks which they have taken to see the poor, the attentions which they have paid to the fatherless and the widow, the hospitality which they have exercised towards the foreigner and the stranger, the condescensions towards the prisoner, and the various comforts which they have administered

to the afflicted. It is not, indeed, the sum given that will, in their Lord's sight, determine the character; for the widow's mite will hereafter count for a larger sum than many an admired donation of the affluent; and "whoso shall have given even a cup of cold water to one of the little ones of Christ's flock, in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward."

Alas! how little is true christianity as yet understood in the world! There is a slight and superficial religion, which, in its fruits, is hardly to be distinguished from infidelity, and by which, nevertheless, men contrive to quiet their consciences while they are in this world. To expose all this false christianity to shame and contempt, will be one effect of the day of judgment; for that is the day in which the hearts of men are to be searched, their several actions weighed, the motives to them examined, their good works ascertained, and all their secret sins brought to light. What sacrifices did we here make to God and a good conscience? That will be one part of the question. How far did we resist the world? "The world," we are told in Scripture, "lieth in wickedness." We were warned to take heed, "lest we be condemned with the world." We were commanded "not to be conformed to it." It is in this manner the reality of the faith and grace that were in us will be enquired into on the Judgment Day. It is the reality of our repentance that will then be tried, the reality of our love to God, and our simplicity and sincerity in his sight. Vain excuses will no longer serve. The various pleas which we

here have made for indulging ourselves in sloth or sin, for giving way to our evil tempers, for conforming to the evil customs around us, for omitting unwelcome duties, for profaning the sabbath, or for neglecting prayer and the worship of God, will not bear to be urged on the day of judgment. No; our mouths will be stopped just as the mouth of some poor criminal sometimes is in this world, who, before he was brought to the bar, insisted on his innocence, but when forced to give in his evidence, finds it no longer possible to make, before his judge, the same shuffling excuses by which he had justified himself among his fellow criminals.

“ Verily, it is a small thing to be judged by one another, or of man’s judgment, for he that judgeth us is the Lord.” What will it matter whether we had more or less character while on earth? The day of judgment will declare to the assembled world what we really were. The day of judgment will rectify all errors: the day of judgment will find us out.

There is no circumstance, perhaps, in our description of this day, more calculated to strike terror into many a heart than this: I mean that the most secret things shall then be laid open. Oh what discoveries will then be made! What secret robberies and adulteries, and deeds of darkness, will be revealed! All the crimes perpetrated in the world from generation to generation: all the cruelties and oppressions which have been ever committed under the sun, and which there was here no one to redress, and all the violences and murders under which the world has

groaned, but which, by some means or other, have gone unpunished, and many of which have been here entirely concealed, shall be brought to light. "For the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." For now "that great and terrible day of the Lord is come," on which also "the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open." It is the "day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God," when the sentence against evil workers, which has been so long delayed, shall be executed; when the triumph of the wicked shall be over, when "the Lord shall repay fury to his adversaries," and when he shall "reward the faith and patience of his saints."

I ought, here, lastly, to add, that we shall all be judged, undoubtedly, according to our opportunities of improvement, and our means of grace. "The servant that knew not his master's will shall be beaten with few stripes; but the servant who knew it, and yet did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. What awful threatenings did our Saviour denounce on the cities that heard his gospel, and yet would not attend to it!—"Woe unto thee Chorazin! woe unto thee Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented; wherefore it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for thee." Those, therefore, who in this world were long hearers of the gospel, and yet profited not by it; those "who had line upon line, and precept upon precept;" those who had Christian parents to direct

them, and Christian friends to reprove them, and Christian pastors to instruct them, and Christian examples set before them! those who had seasons for reflection afforded them by their parents on the sabbath, and had religious books put into their hands, and had abundant opportunities of becoming acquainted with true religion; those who, moreover, had alarming providences sent to awaken them; who were often warned by God's own afflicting hand of the approach of death, and heard addressed to them many an awful representation of their own future judgment, and who, in spite of all these advantages, still continued to be hardened—these are they that shall receive the chief condemnation.

But who are the persons that will be justified, and that will have reason to rejoice at this great day of their Lord's appearance? I answer, in the words of our Saviour, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they who shall have been reviled, and persecuted, for righteousness sake, for now they shall rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is their reward in heaven."—"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law."

But here before I close this tract, I wish to add

a few words in the way of comfort and encouragement.

Let me bring to my reader's comfortable remembrance, that a man's past sins, even if ever so great, will, when they are repented of, be no obstacle to his salvation; for such is the merciful appointment of God in the gospel. "Who are those," it is said in the Revelations, "who are clothed with white robes, and have palms in their hands? the answer is, "these are they that have washed their garments, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."—"Christ is that Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world; and by him all who believe shall be justified from all things." Heaven, as we have reason to suppose, will not be peopled by those who were innocent from their youth, and whose spotless lives will form their title to admission; for an adulterous, though penitent David, will be found there; a once persecuting Saul, a converted Mary Magdalen, a thief, who repented even on the cross, and a Peter, who once denied his Master. These, and many more, in point of sinfulness not unlike to these, shall, through the all-powerful grace of Christ, obtain a glorious resurrection; for these all repented of their sins, they all, as they had time and opportunity, "brought forth fruits meet for repentance," and these fruits, which are called in Scripture, the fruits of the Spirit, being produced by the Holy Spirit's influence on the heart, are those very works which we have been so largely describing.

Let us then lay our foundation for good works in repentance and deep humility. The tempers

which have been spoken of, such, for instance, as forgiveness of injuries, and a dread of judging others, as well as an overflowing love and pity to our fellow-creatures, arise naturally and easily from a heart broken with a sense of our own iniquities; for the qualifications for Heaven which God requires in us, are not those of a sinless being, but of a penitent and humbled sinner that has been taught in the school of repentance, and has thus learnt to walk in newness of life; and even that love of God, which is so leading a part of true religion, is not a little excited and encreased by the sense of God's forgiveness of us, according to that remark of our Saviour: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, therefore hath she loved much."

Let it be our great fear, however, lest professing to admire the grace of the Gospel, and to believe its truths, we should not be found on the day of judgment to have been walking in a manner worthy of it; and let us treasure up in our minds the many warnings given us in Scripture, that it is by our works that we shall be called upon to prove that we have been true disciples. "Behold," says the blessed Saviour of the world, "I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as HIS WORK shall be."

A N H Y M N :

*On the Second Coming of Christ.*

LO ! He comes with clouds descending,  
He that was for sinners slain ;  
While the host of saints attending,  
Swell the triumph of his train !

Every eye shall now behold him ;  
Every creature bend the knee :  
They that mock'd him too and sold him,  
Pierc'd and nail'd him to the tree.

See, the angels all adore him !  
Hark, the trump proclaims the day !  
All the nations stand before him,  
Heaven and earth are fled away !

Come, thou Saviour long expected,  
Sit on thine eternal throne !  
Thou that wast by man rejected,  
Claim the kingdom for thine own.

# P R A Y E R S

TO BE

Used by a Child or Young Person—By a Grown Person—By the Master or Mistress of a Sunday School—And by the Master or Mistress of a Family.

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## A D D R E S S

TO

INDIVIDUALS ON THE SUBJECT OF THE FOLLOWING PRAYERS.

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**T**HERE are many persons, it is to be feared, who do not accustom themselves to pray at all, than which there cannot be a greater proof of irreligion. Some of these may plead, perhaps, that they have never been taught to pray, or at least that they have no suitable prayer provided for them. To such persons an opportunity is now given of beginning what they cannot but allow to be a good custom, for who can deny that it is a good custom, or rather, indeed, that it is a bounden duty to call day by day on the God who made them.

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selves daily to say over the Lord's Prayer only, and, perhaps, also the Belief. This is often done in a very formal and superstitious manner. The Lord's Prayer is undoubtedly a most excellent pattern for our daily prayers, but it does not appear to have been given by Christ as the only form of Prayer that was to be used; and, it is worthy of remark, that when he uttered it, he took occasion to warn his disciples against the vain repetitions used in prayer by the Pharisees. It is to be feared that even the Lord's Prayer has become a vain repetition in these days, not through any fault in the Prayer itself, but through the unthinking, and, perhaps, over frequent way in which some people use it. Possibly a new form may supply some new thoughts, and may serve to awaken the sort of people I am speaking of to a sense of the true meaning and use both of the Lord's Prayer, and of Prayer in general.

## ADDRESS TO PARENTS.

IT is hoped that there can be little occasion to inform parents, that they ought to teach their children to pray. A short Prayer, fit for persons of twelve or fourteen years of age, is here supplied. The same Prayer may serve both for morning and evening, and the memory, therefore, will be little burthened by learning it by heart. Before children entirely leave their father's house, it is desirable that, instead of the Child's Prayer, they should learn by heart the Morning and Evening Prayer for a Grown Person which follows.

*To Heads of Families.*

IF all Masters and Mistresses of Families would ask each of their servants what is the custom in respect to daily Prayer, and would supply them, if there seems occasion, with the Morning and Evening Prayer for a grown Person, which they will find in this Tract, it is plain, I think, that much benefit might arise, through the blessing of God, both to Masters and Servants: for a Servant's duty to his Master is one of the things which these Prayers will teach.

*Address to Masters and Mistresses of Schools.*

YOU are desired to take notice, that the Prayer for a Sunday School is intended to be used only on a Sunday. The Prayer for an individual may, by merely changing the word *I* into *we*, and the word *me* into *us*, be made to suit a Daily School, and indeed it may be made to suit some Families also. Some of the Family Prayers may also suit Sunday Schools.

*On Family Prayer.*

THE advantages of Family Prayer are many, and they are very plain. The Master of a family (or the Mistress in his absence) by devoutly reading a Morning and Evening Prayer to his Family, instructs both his children and servants in their duty, accustoms them to prayer, makes an open profession of his own religion, brings himself under an obligation to observe a consistent, that is a religious conduct during the day; and above all, let it be remarked, he draws down the blessing

of God on himself and his household. Several Prayers are here offered to Masters and Mistresses of Families, and they who have not yet been used to Family Prayer, have now, therefore, an opportunity of beginning this good custom; and in doing it, may God grant them his blessing!

*General Directions, applicable chiefly to the Case of Private Prayer.*

FIRST: before you proceed to your private prayers, endeavour to compose your thoughts, and then examine yourself for a few moments. Ask yourself in the morning, for instance, what are likely to be the duties and trials of the day that is before you, and in the evening, reflect what have been the sins of the past day. By doing so, you will be enabled to apply the words of your prayer more particularly to your own case, and possibly also you may thus be led to add a few words of your own to what you have got by heart, and by degrees you may thus be inclined to enlarge your daily petitions more and more in your own words, and thus you may learn to pray more and more in spirit and in truth.

Secondly, When about to pray, endeavour to lift up your heart to God for the help of his Holy Spirit; for the Scripture tells us, that it is "the Holy Spirit that helpeth our infirmities." Many people complain of great coldness and indifference while engaged in prayer, and there are few who are not conscious of this in a greater or less degree. Let all then begin, by imploring God's Holy Spirit to assist them in praying as they ought. There cannot be a better introduction to every

360 *General Directions for Private Prayer.*

kind of prayer, than a few secret words first uttered to this effect from the heart.

Thirdly, Beware of wandering thoughts, when engaged in prayer. To this end let every struggle be made, and let it be seriously impressed upon you, that God is now present in an especial manner, and that all absence of mind which is allowed and indulged is a great affront to his Majesty.

Fourthly, But besides being attentive, take care that you are also sincere in your prayer. Ask yourself often, whether you mean what you say while you are praying, and whether you sincerely and earnestly wish the thing that you ask. Accustom yourself not to attend to the mere sound of your words, but to the sense; and if you do not well understand any part of the prayers here offered you, endeavour to get what is difficult explained before you repeat it. Some persons have been known to say prayers day by day, almost every word of which, they have contradicted by their whole conversation and conduct. What a terrible hypocrisy is this! A man's prayers may either be the greatest blessing to him, or the most grievous sin, according to the manner in which he performs them.

Fifthly, Endeavour not only to be sincere in your prayers at the moment when you offer them, but endeavour also, that the same spirit which animates your prayers, may animate your whole life. To this end, examine your life often by means of your prayers. Try whether all your maxims in life, your common speech and your several tempers, as well as your open conduct,

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agree with the prayers which you use. The sincerity which God requires of you is not a momentary sincerity, it is not a short lived and changeable feeling, which is forgotten when you go into the world. The remembrance of what you have been praying for in the morning should follow you into the field, or the shop, and should influence your conduct all the day long.

Lastly, Consider whether God answers your prayers. If you pray aright, depend upon it your prayers will be heard and answered; your tempers will be subdued, your temptations weakened, and your whole mind will be rendered pious if you really pray that it may be so; and if this be not the case, you may reasonably suspect that your prayers have not been such as they ought. If you pray aright, depend upon it, you will improve in every respect; you will gain more humility, more tenderness of conscience, more fear of God, more pleasure in his worship, and more happiness in his service, and also more confidence in Christ, and probably more hope of salvation, in proportion to the earnestness and sincerity of your prayers to God to this effect, for these are all the gifts of that Holy Spirit which God hath promised to them that ask it.

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*A Prayer to be used by a Child, or Young Person,  
both in the Morning and Evening.*

O LORD God Almighty, I beseech thee to have mercy upon me, and to bless me. Defend

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me this day (or this night) by thy mighty power, bestow upon me all things which thou knowest to be needful for me, and help me by thy Holy Spirit, to do whatsoever thou hast commanded. Incline me thankfully to receive instruction ; what I know, give me grace to practise, and make me wise unto salvation. Grant that I may be obedient to my parents and teachers, faithful and diligent in the duties of my calling, and humble, and kind, and merciful. Preserve me from stubbornness, and self-will, and from evil thoughts, and from angry passions, and also from lying and profaneness, and from all vain boasting ; turn my heart from the love of sin, and make me to avoid wicked company.

And pardon all the offences which either in thought, word, or deed, I have committed against thee. O God, forgive all that is past, and receive me now into thy favour, for the sake of thy Son Jesus Christ, my most merciful Lord and Saviour.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with me now and evermore. *Amen.*

*\*Morning Prayer for a Grown Person.*

O LORD God Almighty, I thank thee for having preserved me through the past night, and for granting me health and strength for my duties on this day. Blessed be the Lord for all his mercies, for giving me food to eat and raiment to put on, and for delivering me from many evils which my sins have justly deserved.

I thank thee especially, O Lord, for the gift

of Jesus Christ thy Son. I confess before thee my exceeding guilt, and I pray thee, for Christ's sake, to pardon my offences, and to receive my soul when I die.

I beseech thee also, for his sake, to grant unto me the help of thy Holy Spirit, that I may be enabled to follow my Saviour's example, and to do whatsoever he hath commanded. May I be patient, and humble, and kind, and merciful, endeavouring to do good unto all men, and forgiving those who trespass against me, even as I hope to be forgiven. Grant me grace to labour on this day diligently in my calling, and to be true and just in all my dealings, doing unto others as I would they should do unto me; and help me, O Lord, to restrain my tongue, and to subdue my evil tempers, and to live in temperance, soberness, and chastity. Save me from those sins which in times past have most easily beset me; strengthen me, O Lord, for all my duties, carry me through all my difficulties and troubles, and help me, day by day, to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of my Lord and Saviour.

This Prayer I humbly offer up in the name of Jesus Christ.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with me now and evermore.  
*Amen.*

*An Evening Prayer for a Grown Person.*

O LORD God Almighty, I bless thee for all the mercies of the past day, and I pray thee now

to take me under thy care, and to deliver me from all the perils and dangers of this night. Preserve me, O Lord, both in body and soul, from every evil, and keep me from all sinful thoughts when I am about to close my eyes in sleep.

And pardon, I beseech thee, all my offences, for the sake of Jesus Christ. I confess, O Lord, that I have this day left undone many things which I ought to have done, and done many things which I ought not to have done. Pardon all my pride\* and vanity, my idleness and self-indulgence, my impatience and fretfulness, and discontent. Pardon, O Lord, all the rash and angry words which I have this day spoken, and all the sinful thoughts which have risen up in my mind, and which I have not been careful to resist. And especially I pray thee to pardon my forgetfulness of thee my God, and my want of gratitude and love to Jesus Christ. For these, and all my other sins, which from time to time I have committed, I here implore thy pardon and forgiveness, in the name of my most merciful Saviour.

And since I know that my life is so short and uncertain, help me day by day, to think of my latter end. O Lord, grant me grace so to live that I may not be afraid to die, and do thou receive my soul at last into thine eternal kingdom.

I also beseech thee to give thy blessing to all my dear relations and friends. Bless the poor,

\* Any of these words may be changed, as may suit the case of the person praying, that whatsoever sins have been committed in the day may be mentioned.

the sick, and the afflicted, and all the tempted and distressed. Bless the land in which I live, and especially all the faithful followers of Jesus Christ. Give repentance to those who live in sin. Bless also mine enemies.

And now, O Lord, help me to lie down at peace with thee, and in perfect charity with all men.

These prayers I humbly offer up in the name of Jesus Christ my Saviour.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with me now and evermore. *Amen.*

*Morning Prayer for a Sunday School.*

O LORD God Almighty, who hast faithfully brought us to the beginning of this day, we thank thee for thy merciful preservation of us through the past night. We also thank thee for all thy goodness to us, for our health and strength, and food and raiment, and friends and benefactors. More especially we bless thy name for giving us the Holy Scriptures, in order that we may be instructed in the will of God, and in the way of everlasting life.

Dispose, O Lord, all who are here present, to attend reverently to the truths they hear, and suffer them not to give way to indolence, or carelessness of mind, or to hardness of heart and unbelief. Teach them also to apply the Scriptures to their own use. When they read of thy judgments, may they stand in awe of thy great power and majesty, and when they read of thy promises, and especially of thy mercies in Christ,

may their hearts be filled with gratitude to their Redeemer, and may they take delight in singing thy praises.

And we pray thee, O Lord, to grant unto them the continual help of thy Holy Spirit, that they may day by day be preserved from sin, and may become fruitful in every good work. May they be faithful to the Lord their God, and upright in their conduct towards all men. May they be true and honest in all their dealings, doing unto others as they would that others should do unto them. May they be obedient to their parents and teachers; and may they be temperate, sober, and diligent; may no untruth proceed out of their lips, and may they learn both to command their tempers and restrain their tongues, and may they be kind and merciful to each other, forgiving one another, even as they hope that God, for Christ's sake, will forgive them.

And pardon, O Lord, all their sins in time past, which either in thought, word, or deed, they have committed against thee. Receive, O Lord, all these children into thy favour, and into the arms of thy mercy; grant unto them true repentance, and an unfeigned faith in Jesus Christ their Lord.

We also beseech thee to prepare them for all those events in life which thy Providence may see fit at any time to bring upon them. Thou knowest the various temptations and troubles to which before long they may be exposed, and the situations to which they may be called. We therefore pray thee, now to arm them for every

future trial, and to train them up for the performance of all those duties which thou shalt hereafter require of them. May they be grounded in the knowledge of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, and may they now begin to fight under the banners of their Saviour against the world, the flesh, and the devil; and as they advance in life may they grow in grace, each of them striving to recommend that gospel which they have been taught, and shining as lights in the world.

And finally we pray, that having thus done thy will, and enjoyed thy favour, all the days of their lives, they may at length be received into those everlasting habitations which thou hast prepared for them that love thee.

We offer up these our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, through whom alone we hope for the pardon of our sins, and in whose words we further call upon thee.

OUR Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven: give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

*Evening Prayer for a Sunday School.*

O LORD God our heavenly Father, we beseech thee to pour down thy blessing on these children, and to grant that the words which they

have this day heard with their outward ears, may, through thy grace, be so grafted inwardly in all their hearts, that they may bring forth in them the fruits of good living, to the praise and glory of thy name.

Forgive, O Lord, all the imperfections which thou hast seen in their worship and services on this day. Forgive also the various sins of their past lives; may they repent of them with unfeigned sorrow and contrition of heart, and may they lie down this night, trusting in Jesus Christ their Lord.

We commit them to thy watchful care, and to thy mercies in Jesus Christ. Defend them, we pray thee, from all the dangers of darkness: do thou keep them, O Lord, by night and by day; let thy blessing attend them to the end of their lives; and when they shall lay down their bodies in the grave, do thou receive their souls into thine eternal kingdom.

We pray thee, O Lord, to give thy blessing to all their friends and relations; grant unto their parents, grace to lead a Christian life, and to set a good example to their families, that so they, and their children whom thou hast given them, may meet together in heaven. We commend to thee also, the bountiful benefactors of these children. Be merciful unto all those who have shewn them mercy, and make them heirs of everlasting life. Bless the teachers of this school; give them grace both to know their duty and to fulfil it.

We pray for the land in which we live, for the king and all in authority, and especially for all

ministers of the Gospel; give success to their labours on this day; may their preaching be made effectual to overcome the various sins of men, and to make them obedient to the will of God.

Bless, we pray thee, in an especial manner, the true followers of Jesus Christ; build them up in their most holy faith, unite them in the bonds of Christian love, preserve them from the wickedness that is in the world, and make them to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

We would also make intercession for the poor, the sick, and the afflicted, for the widow and the fatherless, and for all those who have none to help them; O Lord, bless unto them their earthly troubles, and turn them to their soul's good, and do thou protect and defend them, and appear for them when all human help fails.

We pray also for the whole rising generation; may they be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Put into the hearts of all parents and teachers, a concern for the souls of those over whom thou hast set them, and give thy grace to the children of this land, that they may hear instruction with a teachable spirit, and may be made wise unto salvation.

And finally we pray thee to have mercy on those who are now living in ignorance and sin, and are without God in the world. Turn them, O Lord, from their evil ways, give them true repentance, and send abroad the gospel of Jesus Christ into this and all lands.

These prayers we offer up in the name of our

only Lord and Saviour, in whose words also we further address thee, saying, Our Father, &c.

May the grace, &c.

*Morning Prayer for a Family.*

O LORD God Almighty, assist us now to draw near unto thee with deep reverence and humility of mind. Deliver us from all wandering thoughts, and enable us to worship thee in such a manner that thou mayest hear our prayers and pour down thy blessing upon us.

O Lord God of Heaven, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, giver of every good and perfect gift, we thank thee for all thine unmerited mercies bestowed upon this family, and we pray thee by thy grace to preserve every one of us from sinning against thee.

Defend us through this day by thy mighty power; save us from the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil; put into our hearts good desires, and help us to fulfil all thy precepts and commandments. And since thou hast sent thy Son Jesus Christ into the world to die for our sins, and to become the Saviour of our souls, O Lord, give us grace, day by day to thank thee for this unspeakable gift, and help us to remember that we are not our own, but are bought with a price, and make us willing therefore, both to do and suffer all things to which thou mayest be pleased to call us: teach us to be this day patient and humble, and thankful, and contented with our lot, often lifting up our thoughts to Heaven, having our chief desires fixed on a better world. And make us holy in all manner of conversation

as becometh the disciples of Jesus Christ; make this household, we pray thee, to be a household that feareth God; may we be delivered from the corruption that is in the world; and may we also dwell together in unity. May we put away from us all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and evil speaking, and all malice; and may we be kind one towards another, forgiving one another, even as we hope that God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. And help us to know our several duties in life that we may fulfil them. May we be upright and diligent; may we waste no time, and neglect no opportunity of doing good that is afforded us. May we be ready to do every good work.

And teach us to be ever watchful and circumspect, and fearful of running into temptation; but if, at any time, we are overtaken with a fault, give us grace to confess it, and repent of it, and to ask forgiveness both from God and man.

O Lord, pardon the many sins which in times past we have committed against thee. Forgive our forgetfulness of thee our God, and our many trespasses against our neighbours. Grant unto us all true repentance, and help us day by day to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. *Amen.*

*Evening Prayer for a Family.*

O LORD our heavenly Father, we beseech thee to hear the prayers which we are about to offer up unto thee ; deliver us from all wandering thoughts, and help us to remember, that we are now in the presence of that God unto whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid.

O God, we pray thee to forgive the sins of the past day. We acknowledge that we have this day left undone many things which we ought to have done, and done many things which we ought not to have done. We have trespassed against thee in thought, word and deed. And though we have been encouraged by thy Gospel to repent of our iniquities, and to serve God in newness of life, yet we have many times returned to those sins which we profess to have repented of, and we have fallen under thy just wrath and displeasure.

But we pray thee, O thou God of all grace and goodness, for the sake of thy Son Jesus Christ, to pardon all that is past, and to take us into thy favour this night, not weighing our merits, but forgiving our offences, and causing us to place our humble trust in thy mercy. Deliver us, we pray thee, from the troubles of a guilty conscience, now that we are about to lie down to rest. Save us, O Lord, from the dread of death, and from the terrors of the wrath to come. Grant unto us, if it please thee, a quiet night, and make us all to be at peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

At the same time we beseech thee, not to suffer that we should deceive ourselves by any false hope, but give us grace, day by day to examine ourselves with care and diligence, that we may discover all that is amiss in us. O Lord, deliver us from continuing in any known sin. Save us from every secret iniquity: may we each of us resolve before we go to rest this night, to forsake, by thy grace assisting us, every former transgression, and may we now devote ourselves entirely to thy service.

We further beseech thee to bless all our relations, friends, and connections: take both them and us under thy protection this night. And have mercy on all those who are in pain, sickness, or any other adversity; do thou lighten their troubles, and support them by thy heavenly grace.

And accept our thanks for all thy goodness vouchsafed unto us this day. Praised be the Lord for all his mercies, for the health and strength, and food, and raiment, and comforts of every kind which we have enjoyed. But above all, we desire to bless thy name for the gift of Jesus Christ, thy Son, for the instructions of thy sacred word, and for the hope of everlasting life. O Lord, grant unto us grace to receive these, and all thy blessings, with a thankful heart; and let us shew forth thy praise, not with our lips only, but with our lives. Accept, we beseech thee, our imperfect supplications and prayers for the sake of Jesus Christ, our only Lord and Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

May the grace, &c.

*Morning Prayer for a Family.*

O LORD God Almighty, who searchest the hearts, and triest the reins of all the children of men, and whose eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good ! We beseech thee to maintain in us this day a constant sense of thy presence.

Thou seest us, O Lord, in our lying down, and in our rising up : for " the darkness and the light are both alike to thee ; " and there is no place where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves. We pray that the thought of thine all-seeing eye may preserve us from sinning against thee. May we endeavour, on this day, not only to maintain our character with our fellow-creatures, and to find favour in their sight, but may we strive also to please God, and may we do from the heart whatsoever things thou commandest. We pray that when we are alone this day, our secret thoughts may be pure and holy : when we are in company, may we so speak and act as shall be pleasing to our heavenly Father ; and when we are labouring in our calling, may we be faithful and diligent, and at the same time may we perform our work in thy fear, and with a view to thy glory.

Preserve us also from all undue eagerness and anxiety in the pursuits of this life. May we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, trusting that all other things which are needful to the body shall be added unto us. And let not our troubles this day overwhelm us ; let not any disappointments greatly vex us ; and let not the

prosperity which thou mayest be pleased to send, become a temptation and a snare. We pray that we may be this day serious, and sober-minded, and watchful, and circumspect, and mindful of our eternal interests.

O Lord, help us always to remember, that life is short, and that one thing is needful. May we, day by day, be mindful of death, and prepare for eternity. We thank thee that thou hast sent thy Son into the world to save us, and that he hath died for our sins, and hath risen from the dead, and is gone into heaven to prepare a place for us. O God, grant, we beseech thee, that we may none of us continue careless and unbelieving, but may we repent of all our past offences, and the life which we now live in the flesh, may we live by the faith of the Son of God. May we trust thy promises in Jesus Christ. May we hope continually in thy mercy: may we set the Lord always before us: may we overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil; and may we be willing daily to deny ourselves, as our blessed Saviour hath commanded; and thus, by thy grace assisting us, may we so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not those things which are eternal. We ask this for the sake of Jesus Christ our only Lord and Saviour.

May the grace, &c.

*Evening Prayer for a Family.*

O LORD God our heavenly father! assist us now to draw near unto thee with reverence, and grant us thy Holy Spirit, that we may worship

thee in an acceptable manner, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

O Lord God Almighty! we thank thee for all thy mercies during the past day; and we are now met together both to praise thee for thy goodness, and to commend ourselves to thy protection. Preserve us from all the dangers of this night, and grant us, if it please thee, such quiet and refreshing rest, that we may be prepared for all those duties of life which are before us.

We also earnestly beseech thee to pardon the sins which we may this day have committed; and to this end help us now to confess them before thee, examining ourselves with all impartiality and seriousness. Pardon every evil temper which we have shewn this day, and every rash and angry word which we may have spoken. Pardon also any want of strict integrity in our conduct. Pardon whatsoever insincerity and hypocrisy thy holy eyes may have this day seen in any of us. Pardon our want of due watchfulness over ourselves, and our too great readiness to cast blame continually on others. Pardon all our disobedience to thy laws: pardon also our want of submission to thy providence, and of zeal in thy service.

For these and all our other sins, which we have any of us either on this day, or at any other time committed, we here unite in imploring mercy through the name of our most blessed Saviour. O Lord, forgive us for Jesus Christ's sake. Lay not any of our past sins to our charge,

but blot them out from thy remembrance, for the sake of him who hath died for us. Give us penitent and contrite hearts, and let us lie down this night in thy favour.

We also implore thy blessing on all our friends and relations. Watch over them, we beseech thee, by thy good Providence; teach them all to live in thy fear, and to hope in thy mercy. Bless the land in which we live, and especially the faithful followers of Jesus Christ. Have pity on those who are deprived of the comforts which we enjoy, and are lying down this night in pain, sorrow, and affliction; grant them patience under their sufferings, and make them at length partakers of thine heavenly kingdom. And teach us, O Lord, to have compassion on the afflicted, and to pray for them, and to do good unto all men, and to live in peace and harmony one with another.

We offer up these our imperfect prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, our only Lord and Saviour.

May the grace, &c.

*Prayer for a Family on Sunday Morning.*

O LORD God Almighty, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we bless thy name for all thy mercies vouchsafed unto us the children of men.

We thank thee, O Lord, for all the blessings of this life, but especially we praise thee for giving us thy holy word, for sending to us the ministers of thy Gospel, and for appointing the sabbaths to be a season of rest for our bodies,

and to be a day on which we may also attend to the salvation of our immortal souls.

O Lord, grant, we beseech thee, that we may rightly use the religious opportunities which we enjoy. Preserve us from thoughtlessness and inattention during thy public worship.—In prayer may we feel our need of the mercies we implore ; in the confession of sin, may we be affected with the sense of our unworthiness ; and in offering up thanksgivings to God, may we pour out our whole hearts before thee. We pray also, that when we shall hear thy word read, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to us, we may listen with an attentive ear, and receive thy truth into an honest and good heart.

And we beseech thee to preserve in us a right frame of mind throughout the day that is now before us. May we remember that this is the day on which our Saviour rose from the dead, having by his death obtained eternal redemption for us. May we therefore think of our ascended Lord, and may we put away from us all folly and vanity, as well as vice and wickedness, and all eager desires after the things of this life, and all anger, and passion, and envy, and malice, and whatsoever else is either unsuitable to this sacred day, or is unbecoming the followers of Jesus Christ.

O Lord, we lament that in passing through the week, we are so often entangled by the cares of this life, and overpowered by temptations which come upon us unawares. But we pray thee now to call away our thoughts from earthly things,

and to fix them on those unspeakable joys which are at thy right hand for evermore. We pray thee on this day to strengthen our faith, to increase our hope, and to fill our hearts with love to thee, and with fervent charity towards our neighbour. Help us also to repent of our sins, examining carefully our conduct during the week, and thus may we learn to amend our lives, and to run with patience the race that is set before us.

And, together with these prayers for ourselves, we offer up our supplications in behalf of all christian congregations. Give thy grace to all the ministers of thy Gospel, and enable them every where this day to preach thy word with faithfulness to the souls of men. Make thy Gospel effectual, to pull down the pride of the high-minded, to alarm the careless, and convince the wavering, to encourage them that are as yet weak in faith, and to give peace and consolation to every troubled heart.

And, O Lord, we beseech thee, to send thy Gospel to the nations which now sit in darkness. Put an end to all false religion, and idolatry, and ignorance, and error; and give thy blessing to those who, in distant lands, are making known the light of thy truth.

We offer up these our prayers, in the name of Jesus Christ, our only Lord and Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

May the grace, &c.

*Prayer for a Family on Sunday Evening.*

O Lord God Almighty, Father of mercies, we beseech thee, for Christ's sake, to hear the prayers which we are now about to offer up unto thee.

We pray thee, O Lord, to give thy blessing to the instruction which we have this day heard, and to grant that it may be so grafted inwardly in all our hearts, as to bring forth in us the fruits of good living, to the praise and glory of thy name. Pardon also whatsoever thou hast seen amiss in our worship and services on this day.

And accept, O Lord, our humble confession of all those great and manifold sins, which, from time to time, both in thought, word, and deed, we have committed against thee: for we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us. We have sinned, O Lord, by our pride and vanity, by our indulgence of many sinful passions, by our fretfulness, impatience and discontent; by our emulation, our ambition, and our covetousness. We have sinned also by our sloth and negligence, by our forgetfulness of many duties of our calling, by our too great love of this present world, and by our carelessness in following many of those evil customs which we have found in it. More especially we have sinned by our inattention to thy written word, to thy preached gospel, and to all the means of thy grace.

For these, and all our numberless offences, we here implore thy pardon and forgiveness, in the name of Jesus Christ; at the same time we thank thee for so mercifully providing this Saviour for us, who came down from Heaven, and died for our sins, and who now sitteth at thy right hand, making intercession for us.

We also beseech thee, for Christ's sake, to grant unto us the help of thy Holy Spirit, that we may now forsake every evil way, and may amend our lives according to thy holy word. O Lord, preserve us through the ensuing week from sinning against thee. Save us from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Carry us through all our temptations and dangers. Fit us for whatsoever duties are before us; and when we have fulfilled thy will on earth, receive us at length to thine eternal kingdom, through Jesus Christ.

And the same things which we have been imploring for ourselves, we humbly ask in behalf of our dear friends and relations. Grant unto them pardon of their sins, a humble faith in Jesus Christ their Lord, and grace to walk in the way of thy commandments. Be merciful to the land in which we live. Bless our King, and all in authority. Give thine especial grace to the ministers of thy Gospel, that they may both preach thy true and lively word, and may also be examples to their flock of all virtue and goodness. Let thy blessing also descend on all the faithful followers of Jesus Christ. Save them from the temptations which are in the world: strengthen their faith and hope, and unite them in the bonds

of Christian charity with each other. And have pity on all those who neglect thy Gospel, profane thy sabbaths, and live as if there was no God in the world. Convince them of their sins before it is too late, and incline them to seek for mercy through that Saviour whose grace they now despise. And, O Lord, deliver every one of us from all hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word and commandments. Make us to lie down this night thankful for the opportunities of instruction which we have enjoyed, and for all the blessings of the Gospel. And may the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and fear of God, and of his Son Christ Jesus.

Our Father, &c.

May the grace, &c.

*A Family Prayer for Sunday Morning or Evening.*

O LORD God Almighty, who hast given us thy sabbaths to be a day of rest for our bodies, and of serious attention to the concerns of our souls; who hast also caused the holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, and hast sent among us the ministers of thy Gospel, that through their preaching we may be made wise unto salvation, we beseech thee to give thy blessing to all the means of grace with which we are favoured on this day.

Help us to examine our hearts and lives, and to discover all that is amiss in us. If there be any duty which we neglect, or any iniquity in which we continue to live; if there be any evil habit to which we yield, or any unchristian tem-

per against which we do not earnestly contend; if also there be any inattention allowed in ourselves in the midst of thy public worship, any neglect of secret prayer, or any dislike to serious piety and devotion, we pray that we may each of us, on this day, discover it through thy grace assisting us. May we perceive the awful danger to our souls, and implore of thee to take away from us the heart of stone, and to put thy Spirit within us.

Pardon, O Lord, we beseech thee, the sins of the past week. Pardon also the multiplied iniquities of our lives, by which, day after day, and year after year, we have been adding to the load of our guilt. Here, in thy presence, we would kneel down together to confess them before thee, and we would implore thy mercy in the name of Jesus Christ. O let our offences be all blotted out, and our souls delivered from eternal death, through the merits of him who hath died for us. We acknowledge that we have no hope in ourselves, and that our whole trust and confidence are in thy mercy. Reject not, we beseech thee, this prayer of our hearts, but let our cry come up unto thee, O thou merciful Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And while we thus pray for ourselves, we earnestly lift up our supplication in behalf of others also. Give thy blessing this day to the preaching of thy Gospel. May thy servants be built up in their most holy faith, and may sinners be converted unto thee. May the Gospel of Christ be believed in this land, and his commandments obeyed; and may the blessed example of his holy

life be followed. We pray also, that all Christians may have their hearts this day knit together in love, that so they may become disposed to unite in forwarding every good work.

Have pity on the multitudes who are living without God in the world, and who understand neither their own sinfulness nor thy mercy. We lament, O Lord, that wherever we turn our eyes, we see vice and wickedness so dreadfully prevail; and we would pray, as we have been taught to do by our blessed Saviour, that thy kingdom may come, and thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Send thy Gospel, we beseech thee, to all parts of the world. O let thy name be known on earth, thy saving health among all nations. And bless, we pray thee, to this end, all those who are labouring in foreign climes, in the cause of Christ, and are making manifest the favour of his name in every place. Give them grace to adorn, by their lives, that holy doctrine which they profess; and let thy Spirit make their word effectual, for the conversion of many hearers.

We further implore thy blessing on our relations and connections, and on all that are dear to us; and we desire to commend both ourselves and them this day to thy protection and mercy.

Give thy special grace to each of us who are united in the same family. Pour down thy Spirit upon us. May those who rule in this household be enabled to govern it well, and in the fear of God; and may they have grace to set an example of all goodness and virtue. May every servant be a servant of the Lord Jesus

Christ; and may they remember, that they have a Master in Heaven. May those of this family who are young, be preserved from the corruption that is in the world; may they renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. And give to those among us who are beginning to advance in years, and especially to such as are aged, grace to redeem the remaining time, and to fulfil the work appointed for them before they leave this present world and give up their accounts to God. O teach us all to be serious and sober minded, and to think on our latter end.

Be merciful to us throughout the week, and help us often to renew our repentance, and to strive earnestly to please thee. Strengthen us, O Lord, for all our duties; save us from our several temptations and dangers; comfort us whensoever we come into trouble and adversity; guide us through this world by thy good Providence; and grant that we who have here met together to worship thee on earth, may meet at length to praise and to bless thee for ever and ever in thy kingdom above.

These prayers we humbly offer up in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

*A Family Prayer proper to be used on the Occasion  
of any Death or material Sicknefs in a Family.*

O LORD God Almighty, who sendest to us prosperity or adversity, health or sickness, life or death, as thou pleasest; we pray that all the mournful dispensations of thy Providence may be made to teach us wisdom. May they lessen in us the love of this world; may they lead us to cease from every sin, and may they dispose us to great seriousness of mind; and the more we meet with sorrow here, may we only look forward with so much the more earnestness to that happier and better state which thou hast graciously revealed to us.

We beseech thee, O Lord, to grant us faith in all the glorious promises of thy word.

We bless thee, that thy Son Jesus Christ hath brought life and immortality to light by his gospel, and that having first died for our sins, he hath also risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. May we place our hope and trust steadfastly in Christ; may we repent of our iniquities, and obtain pardon through his name; and after a life of holy obedience to thy will, may we be made partakers of all the benefits of his resurrection.

And since we know that our days on earth are so short and uncertain, grant that whatsoever our hands find to do, we may do it with all our might. May we be diligent each of us in our proper work, and watchful and circumspect, and sober-minded and temperate in all things; may we also live in

peace and harmony one with another, not rashly judging one another, since we must all so soon meet together to be judged, each of us for our own sins, at the judgment seat of Christ.

We beseech thee also, O heavenly Father, to give us patience under the evils of life, and a spirit of resignation to thy righteous will. When thou bestowest on us thy blessings, may we be thankful for them; and when thou art pleased to remove them from us, may we be enabled to say, "It is the Lord that giveth and the Lord that taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

And whensoever it shall please thee to call us out of this evil world, we pray that we may be found ready; may we be doing thy will and walking in thy ways, and watching with all prayer and perseverance, lest that day should overtake us unprepared. May thy good Spirit also sustain and strengthen us in our last hours. May the Lord be our help through life, and our support in sickness and in death, and may He be our portion for evermore.

Together with these prayers for ourselves, we would make intercession for others also. [Especially for thy servant whom thou hast visited with sickness, beseeching thee, if it be thy will, to restore *his* health, and to make *him* thankful henceforth for thy mercy, and devoted to thy service.]

We pray for all them that are afflicted; may God be merciful to them, and strengthen them under all their trials, and give them, in his good

time, deliverance. And especially may the Lord pardon their sins, for Jesus Christ's sake.

We pray for the multitudes who are thoughtless of God, and reflect not on death and judgment. Teach thou the young to remember their Creator in the days of their youth. Preserve those who are in the midst of their days from being occupied only by the things of this life, and dispose the aged to consider seriously, how fast the day of their death advances.

And now, O Lord, take us all into thy favour; pardon our many sins and imperfections, and give us grace henceforth more carefully to consider our ways; and when we shall have served thee faithfully here on earth, receive us at length to thine eternal kingdom, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

*A Family Prayer proper to be used when any Member of the Family has recovered from Sickness, or on the Occasion of any other special Mercy.*

O LORD God Almighty, Father of all mercies, we desire to thank thee for all thy various gifts bestowed upon us. [Especially for thy late mercy vouchsafed to thy servant, who is a member of this family.] Thou hast surrounded each of us with various temporal blessings; thou hast often visited us in great mercy, and wrought out many deliverances for us. When sick, thou hast restored us to health; when in trouble, thou hast delivered us; when in difficulty, thou hast made a way for our escape. We are all the living mo-

numents of thy goodness; and O how great, therefore, should be our thankfulness and praise!

O Lord, we would bless thee with unfeigned hearts for the comforts which now surround us. We bless thee for so favouring us in our lot in life, for multiplying to us thy various gifts, for giving to many of us so much health and strength, as well as to each of us food and raiment, and for bestowing on us friends and benefactors, and kind relations. We would remember also, thy great mercy in placing us where thy gospel is known; we thank thee for giving us the Holy Scriptures to be our guide, for bestowing thy sabbaths upon us, for permitting us to hear thy word preached in our ears, and for thus favouring us with all the means of grace.

Grant unto us, O Lord, we beseech thee, hearts duly sensible of our Maker's goodness, and teach us often to lift up our thoughts to Him who is the giver of all that we enjoy. Deliver us from a repining spirit. May we be thankful and obedient, and not complaining and self-willed. May we bear, with a quiet mind, such evils of life, as may, at any time, befall us, knowing that our lot is always far happier than we deserve; and whensoever we are tempted to impatience, may we think of our sins, and also call to remembrance the instances of thy past goodness. And we pray thee to give us also a spirit of meekness and forbearance towards our fellow-creatures. Thou, O Lord, hast long borne with us, O may we bear with one another, and be ready to forgive, even as we hope to be forgiven. May we walk according to the spirit.

of thy Gospel in all humility and meekness, and patience, and loving-kindness, and charity, bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ.

And pardon all our sins in time past, and especially our want of due gratitude and thankfulness. May we each of us repent both of our trespasses against thee, and of every evil temper towards our neighbour. May we enjoy thy future favours with a more thankful heart, and, while we receive benefits at thy hands, may we ourselves endeavour to shew mercy and loving-kindness unto all men. These, and all other things, which thou knowest to be needful for us, we humbly ask, in the name, and for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c. &c.

*A Prayer for true Repentance, proper either for a Family, or for an Individual.*

O LORD God Almighty, who hast power over the hearts of men, we beseech thee to bestow upon us the gift of thy Holy Spirit, and to grant unto us true repentance and faith in Jesus Christ our Lord,

We acknowledge and bewail our manifold offences, which, from time to time, both in thought, word, and deed, we have committed against thee, and we place all our hope in thy mercy. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the praise given for our salvation. We have broken thy law, we have despised thy grace, we

have been deaf to the invitations of thy gospel. Day after day we have hardened our hearts against thee. We have committed many and grievous offences, both against God, and against our neighbour. We are conscious of many a secret sin, of which thou, and thou only, hast been the witness; and, when we number up the trespasses of all our past lives, we are confounded by the multitude of our iniquities. But thou, O Lord, art merciful and gracious, not willing that any should perish, but that all should turn unto thee; and our Saviour hath declared, that whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out. We would now repent and draw near to God with unfeigned sorrow and contrition of soul; and we would implore thy promised mercy. O Lord, we believe, help thou our unbelief. Enable us to put our whole trust in Christ, and to cast ourselves, as lost sinners, on thy mercy. We plead the name of Him who hath died for us. O pardon our offences, for Jesus Christ's sake, and for his sake receive us now into thy favour, and make us heirs of eternal life.

We pray also, that having repented of all our sins which are past, we may have grace to lead a new life, and to walk henceforth in the way of thy commandments. Let not our temptations again overpower us; let not sin regain the dominion over us, lest we fall into tenfold condemnation. Give us strength against all the enemies of our souls; put thy fear into our hearts; make us watchful and circumspect, and careful to avoid

temptation, lest we should again be found sinning against thee.

And deliver us also from all delusion and self-deceit. Make us fearful of indulging ourselves in any false hope, and anxious to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. And to this end may the Spirit of Truth enlighten and direct us. Do thou keep us, O Lord, in all our ways. O strengthen what is weak, and perfect all that is wanting in us. Help us, when we are tried, to endure temptation, and preserve us blameless unto the day of the second coming of our Lord and Saviour.

These, our earnest Prayers, we humbly offer up in the name of Jesus Christ.

*A Prayer proper to be used in a Family during the present War.*

O LORD God Almighty, who art wont to visit nations with thy judgments, in order that they may repent and turn unto thee, we beseech thee to hear our prayers in behalf of this sinful land.

We acknowledge that thou justly punishest us for our offences, for we have forgotten the God of our Fathers, and we have turned aside from the gospel of our salvation. And, through this forgetfulness of thee, we have fallen into many and grievous sins, and have provoked thy just indignation.

O Lord, we lament the vice and wickedness, the fraud and covetousness, the hatred and variance, and the many unchristian and unholy tem-

pers which abound among us. We lament also the self-confidence and pride of heart with which we have been filled ; for we have not thanked thee in our prosperity, and in our adversity we have not humbled ourselves before our God. We have trusted in ourselves, and in an arm of flesh, and have not looked unto Him from whom our help cometh.

Afflict us, therefore, now to confess from the heart our dependance upon thee, and hear thou the earnest supplications which we would offer to thy Divine Majesty.

O Lord, have mercy upon us for Jesus Christ's sake. Pardon the numberless sins of this guilty nation, and, in thy great mercy, turn away thy judgments from us. Save us, we beseech thee, from the hand of our enemies. Suffer them not to prevail against us. Dispose thou their rulers to peace ; and unite the hearts of the people of these kingdoms, and incline them always to live in harmony one with another. And whatsoever sins any of us, who are here present, may have committed, whereby we have contributed to bring down thy wrath upon our native land, do thou forgive, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Have compassion, we beseech thee, on all orders of men among us. Bless our king, defend him from all secret conspiracies, and open violence ; prolong his life, prosper his days, and endue his ministers with grace, wisdom, and understanding.

Give thy blessing to the Houses of Parliament ; and grant that all things may be so ordered and settled by their endeavours, that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety may be established among us for all generations.

We pray for the magistrates of the land, that they may be every where a punishment to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well.

Give thy special grace to all the ministers of thy Gospel : enable them to go forth in thy strength, proclaiming thy judgments to the impenitent, and the greatness of thy mercy to those who are humble and contrite in heart : and grant that the cause of Christ may prosper in their hands.

Bless, we pray thee, the whole rising generation. Preserve them from the contagion of evil principles, and grant that they may be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

We would add our humble and earnest supplications for the poor, the sick, and the afflicted. Give them grace to bear with a patient mind the trials which thou hast appointed for them. Deliver them from too much care about the things of this world. Make them rich in faith, and anxious chiefly to do the will of God, always looking forward with cheerful hope to a better world.

We pray also for our enemies, that thou wouldst forgive them, and turn their hearts, and make them all to be at peace with us.

And, finally, we pray for all our brethren of mankind, that a way may be opened in thy pro-

vidence for making known thy Gospel, and also for establishing it in it's purity all over the earth.

And now, O Lord, to thee do we commend ourselves, and all that are dear to us, beseeching thee to guard us from evil, and to grant, that whatsoever may be thy judgments all around us, we may be kept in perfect peace, having our minds stayed on thee. And whensoever it shall please thee to call us out of this evil world, receive us to thyself; all which we ask, in the name, and for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

May the grace, &c.

THE END.

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